THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ANGELL JAMES,

ONEWHILE MINISTER OF THE CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN
CARRS LANE BIRMINGHAM.

VOL. I.

SERMONS.

LONDON: HAMILTON, ADAMS, & CO.
BIRMINGHAM: HUDSON & SON.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The Editor reserves his Preface till the last volume, contenting himself in the meantime with the following announcement.

This edition is intended to comprise all the Author's printed works, except a pamphlet on the Wolverhampton Chapel case, of which only a notice will be inserted, as it has lost its interest.

But for this the Editor required the consent of the Committee of the Religious Tract Society, as they have the copyright of such of the Author's works as they now publish, and it was given in the kindest and most handsome manner, subject only to stipulations required by their duty to their society.

The Author destroyed most of his sermons, but he has left many; some composed for special but recurring occasions, as ordinations, missionary services, and the opening of a place of worship, and others those which, from his preaching them at different places, he appeared to value most; and it has been thought that some of those who heard them preached would be glad to possess them in print. If it should appear that they are desired, the Editor will publish a selection from them, but he will not trust to his own discretion alone.

It is intended to arrange the works as far as possible in divisions according to their subjects, which will be the plan most convenient for purchasers of the whole, and it will also suit those who wish only the volume or volumes containing a particular division.

It is hoped that the republished works will be comprised in twelve volumes, and that a volume will be issued every other month.

The Author printing his works separately, published in sizes any of which, if adopted in a collective edition, would render it contemptible by the number and smallness of the volumes, the Editor has therefore been compelled to adopt a more expensive style of printing in this, which is intended as a library edition. But to avoid all reason for complaint on this ground, each work will be reprinted in its previous size, if it be called for by the public.

The Editor has thought it a duty of his office to endeavour to amend any word or phrase which appeared inaccurate or obscure, and he has added prefatory notices or foot notes containing the information which appeared to him desirable as to any work or its subject, omitting introductory remarks by the Author if now without interest.

He will be obliged by any hints which may be given him as to any particulars connected with this edition. He did not undertake his task lightly, but he feels it would have better suited a practised and skilful hand; still, having performed it to the best of his judgment and ability, he commends it to the Divine blessing and the kind consideration of the public, especially of his father's friends and of the denomination to which he belonged.

T. S. J.

Birmingham,
16th January, 1860.

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PARENTAL DESIRE, DUTY, AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

THE SUBSTANCE OF TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED IN CARRS LANE MEETING-HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM, MARCH 25TH, 1810.

"I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

This, the first of Mr James's printed works, was preached on the occasion of the Editor's baptism. It will be noticed that Mr James commenced his authorship with enforcing one of those relative duties which formed to so great an extent the subjects of his sermons, and his style will be seen to have remained the same from the first.

TO THOSE PARENTS WHO ARE UNITED WITH THE CHURCH OR CONGREGATION, ASSEMBLING FOR DIVINE WORSHIP, IN CARRS LANE MEETING HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM.

My dear Friends,

During the time which I have spent among you as the helper of your joy, it has been one of my greatest felicities to contribute anything to your spiritual consolation and instruction; and many of you having informed me that I could perpetuate this source of pleasure by printing the sermons which I preached at the baptism of my dear child, I now comply with your urgent request, and deliver them to you from the press. I could have directed you to much better discourses than this, on the same subject; and I should thus have answered your desire, had I not remembered that the affectionate advice of a friend, frequently leaves a deeper impression, than the more able admonition of a stranger. I shall make no apology to you for the faults of this discourse, because having heard it from the pulpit you asked for its publication with a previous knowledge of these. To the public I need not apologise, because to them it is not addressed. How greatly will it encourage my future labours for your spiritual welfare, if I find that this exertion was not made in vain. Commending you to God and to the word of his grace,

I subscribe myself,

With affection and sincerity,

Your Servant for Christ's sake,

THE AUTHOR.

Edgbaston, April 28, 1810.

Genesis xvii, 18.

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before Thee.

How discordant have been the voices with which the religious world has answered the momentous question, "What is truth?" Unhappily for the peace of the church, the various sects of which it is composed, in replying to this enquiry, seem to have tried how jarring they could render the sacred tones of religion, by repeating those sentiments in which they differ, rather than how harmonious, by dwelling on those in which they agree. It would be well to consider, how many notes there are which we could all strike in unison: and among many of this kind, one is, the importance of the rising generation; or, which is indeed the true meaning of that expression, of the instruction and government of youth. In whatever point of view we contemplate this subject, it appears supremely grand and interesting. Our children, according as their future character shall be, must live in endless happiness or woe; and therefore a regard for their welfare should rouse our attention to their improvement. They are the blossoms of our earthly comfort or distress; therefore a concern for our own peace should induce us to train them up in the way

they should go. They are to be the actors in the great drama of human life, when we shall have closed our parts, and have made our exits; therefore benevolence to the world should make us cautious what characters we send to act upon its stage. They, if the Redeemer shall have a church upon earth, after the present generation of believers, are to compose that church; therefore zeal for the divine glory should engage our most serious application to this part of Christian duty.

If these considerations impress your mind, listen with solemn and candid attention to the directions with which they are followed.

The text presents us with the example of a father pouring out to God the warmest wishes of his heart on behalf of his child. That father is the venerable Abraham. God had just declared to the patriarch his intention of giving him a son by Sarah his wife. The intelligence was at first received with joyful astonishment, and adoring gratitude, but a fear soon arose in his breast, which damped all his pleasure: What is now to become of Ishmael? must he die to make room for the child of promise? or what would be still worse, must he become another Cain, and go out from the presence of the Lord? Much of our present distress arises from hastiness and impatience of spirit. We are for rushing to the end at once, and will not wait until God has opened his own designs, and illustrated his own meaning. We look at detached parts of the embroidery of Providence, and distress ourselves because we discover a little shade: whereas, if we would but permit Jehovah to go on unfolding the whole piece, we should soon discover that there was no ground of complaint. If Abraham had waited but a few moments

longer, his pleasure would not have experienced this alloy; but nature struggles, the bowels of the father are troubled for his son, and he exclaims, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee." We may, therefore, judge, that this petition expressed a desire, both for the natural and spiritual life of Ishmael—it seemed to say, "Oh let this my son live and share the blessings of the covenant, with him who is to be born of Sarah." Having thus explained the import of this prayer, I shall consider—What blessings a Christian parent should desire from God on behalf of his children—What means must be used by him in order to obtain them—And what encouragement the word of God affords him that the means will be connected with the end.

I shall enquire

I. What blessings should a Christian parent seek from God on behalf of his children?

Is it forbidden to desire the continuance of their natural life? Certainly not; provided that desire be entirely under the control of submission to the will of God. To shudder at the thought of seeing the blooming countenance of life exchanged for the pallid face of death, is the operation of that principle which God himself has planted in the parent's heart: it is the irresistible impulse of nature: and we are not required by Jehovah to tear up with indiscriminate violence every natural feeling of the human breast; but only to weed out the bad ones, and so to check and direct the growth of the rest, that they may not attain a wild and rank luxuriance which would overtop the judgment, or cast a cold destructive shade upon religion itself. What but this strong desire in the breast of the parent for the life of the child, is it that prompts to all those unwearied

exertions which are necessary for its preservation? But for such a principle as this, how many would suffer the kindling lamp of life to expire through neglect, or would extinguish it with violence, rather than endure all the solicitude and fatigue which are necessary to cherish the vital spark, and fan it to a flame!

Nor is it forbidden to ask those things for our children which would contribute so much to their temporal comfort; provided, that desire be also in entire submission to the will of Jehovah. Industry is part of religion: indolence one of the vices which it brands with indelible infamy. "He that provides not for his own household has denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Now what is it that keeps the hive of society from swarming with drones? What is it that braces the arm of industry, and makes it willing to ply at the oar of labour? What is it that enables you to refrain from discontent, as you wipe away from your brow the memorial of a cursed earth? Is it not your children? Is it not a kind anxiety to provide for their future wants, or to help them to provide better for themselves. Who, when he looks over that vale of tears, into which his child has entered, and through which he must pass, and contemplates squalid want, dire disease, frantic madness, the iron hand of oppression, the eye of envy rolling in its socket, seeking whom it may devour, the forky tongue of slander, all like dreadful banditti, infesting his path, and waiting to assault him, who, I say, can help spreading over him the shield of such a prayer as this?—"'Oh! that Ishmael might live before thee,' and have accomplished in his experience thine own words, 'Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence; thou shalt not be afraid of the

terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day, nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day: there shall no evil befal thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling; for he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.' "

Still, however, these things are but secondary objects of desire with him who contemplates, in its true light, the character and destiny of that being which with rapture he calls his child. By the aid of revelation he penetrates the disguise which the helplessness and unconsciousness of infancy seem to have thrown round the noblest part of his nature, and discovers through all this the grandeur and the dignity of Immortality. He sees a spark of being which shall go on kindling until it has witnessed the extinction of the sun himself, and blazed out into eternal existence. He sees in his countenance, that face which is to shine with the glory of God, like the sun in the firmament, or to be clouded with the infamy and horror of the divine curse. He hears a voice which is to be for ever hymning the praises of its Creator; or to be for ever venting blasphemies against its Judge. In short, he contemplates a being born for eternity; one who will be for ever towering from height to height of glory in heaven; or sinking from gulph to gulph of despair in hell. He reflects that his child is born with the latent seeds of corruption in his nature, which await only the advancing spring of life to vegetate, to strike root, to spring up under the fatal warmth of temptation, and bear the bitter fruits of rebellion against God. He sees, in imagination, the world, the flesh and the devil, arming round the very cradle of his infant, fixing their murderous eyes upon his immortal soul and

going out to prepare for his ruin. Amidst the throbbing anguish which such reflections produce in the heart of a believing parent, one thought cheers him, that his child has entered upon a world where a Saviour, wise, powerful and gracious, waits to offer his grace and guidance, as the "Captain of Salvation," to conduct him, through all the successive stages of human life, to the possession and enjoyment of everlasting bliss. With such reflections as these in his breast, the truth of which he can no more doubt, than he can of his own existence, what can, or what ought a Christian parent to desire for his child, as the grand ultimatum of all his anxiety and solicitude, short of everlasting bliss? It is in this sense that he uses the prayer of Abraham, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee." If he possess an immortal soul—if that soul be in danger of being for ever undone—if there be a possibility of his being made eternally and inconceivably happy—to desire any thing for him less than grace here and glory hereafter is cruelty of the blackest kind.

The salvation of the soul being thus pointed out as the object which should constitute the first wish of every parent's heart on behalf of his child,

II. I shall now mention those means which must be used by him in order to obtain it.

In the distribution of his favours to the human race, God generally connects his bounty with our exertions. This remark applies both to temporal and spiritual benefits. Nor can we expect that even our children will be blessed, independently of our efforts. If, therefore, it be asked, what can be done by us that our children may participate in spiritual and eternal blessings? I answer,

in the language of inspiration: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." This exhortation enjoins the whole extent of religious education; on which I shall now insist; as an attention to this subject forms the only rational ground for expectation of the divine blessing on your offspring. Religious education includes, Discipline, Instruction, Example, and Prayer: and any system defective in either of these important particulars is not likely to be attended with success.

1. If we would have our children grow up as we desire, we must maintain Discipline in our families. By Discipline, I mean the exercise of parental authority in enforcing obedience to all suitable commands and prohibitions.

This part of religious education should begin early. The importance of this is written upon the whole system of nature, and is repeated on every page of the history of Providence. The supple twig bends to your will, while the sturdy oak laughs at your authority. A radical mistake with many, who see the importance of discipline generally, is an error as to the period of life when it ought to commence. They forget that children are to be brought under the control of authority, long before they are capable of instruction. The tempers of the heart sprout before the judgment begins to bud; and therefore before the parent can attend to the latter, all his care should be directed to the growth of the former: and as conscience at a very early period of childhood ascends her throne in the breast, cites the little culprits before her tribunal, and makes them sensible of her verdict—we should *as* early, join the exercise of parental

authority with the power of this inward monitor, and impress their minds with the distinction between right and wrong.

Discipline must be reasonable in all its commands: and that reasonableness should, as much as possible, be seen upon the face of the command. We should particularly guard against enjoining anything palpably ridiculous or impracticable. There are few impressions to which the minds of children are more susceptible than those of ridicule: and any command, which, when it is attempted to be obeyed, subjects them to the mortification of either derision or despondency, is destructive of all confidence in parental discretion; a want of confidence is soon followed by contempt, and that as soon by filial rebellion. As frequently, therefore, as possible, when the child is capable of reflection, let the reasonableness of your commands be manifest: but as this cannot always be the case, and where it cannot, your authority must not give way, I exhort you, by a line of consummate wisdom towards your children, to transfuse into their minds that lesson which you have learned with respect to Jehovah, to trust where you cannot trace.

Discipline, to be successful, must be steady and uniform. This is of the utmost importance: for depend upon it that a parent, whose commands spring only from his humour, will soon find to his cost, that he has taught his child to obey from no other principle. The first thing to be attended to in a command is, that it be reasonable; and the second, that it be obeyed. All parents ought to consider themselves invested by God with a degree of authority, which they can at no time suffer to be trampled under foot by their children, without despising an ordinance of God. I have been shocked

to see some families, where parental authority seemed to be the result of no principle, subject to no rule, directed to no end, but caprice: these alternate fits of stern severity and ruinous indulgence were following each other with most destructive influence, like a frosty night succeeding a sunny day in the early spring, to the injury of every tender plant exposed to its baneful attack: there was nothing belonging to parental authority but the scourge, and that never used, but in seasons when it ought never to be used at all;—in moments of passion;—there were the arms of a weak mother affording an asylum to the young fugitive, fleeing from the displeasure of a stern father; there the child, placed between these two extreme sources of ruin, undue severity, and foolish fondness, was learning to abuse the indulgence of the mother, and to detest the authority of the father. Christian parents! is it thus you cause your families to become the nurseries of the church of Christ? alas! they look more like the hotbeds of sedition, and the schools of political demagogues.

The great defect in the administration of public justice, that is, national discipline, in this country, is, that the penalties of the law are too severe to be executed: hence it is that such multitudes are condemned, and compared with this number so few executed: in consequence of this, the severity of the threatened punishment loses all its effect in deterring from the commission of the crime; because of the chance of mitigation which the general practice of our courts holds out to the offender. Take heed that you do not make this the fault of your domestic discipline. Never command what you do not mean to have performed—never threaten what you do not mean to inflict.

Discipline should always be maintained in a spirit of love. For if indulgence has slain its tens of thousands, severity has its thousands. Man is a creature formed to act more by the constraints of love than fear; hence saith God in speaking of Israel, "I drew them with cords of love, with bands of a man." Do we not thus learn from him who constructed the human mind, and of course, best knows the principle on which its operations are to be directed, that it is to be governed by affection? Of all the unseemly, unnatural, disgusting associations, which the disordered state of the moral world ever presented to the eye of an observer, there is not one more repugnant to the feelings than a tyrant's rod, grasped in a father's hand. We shall generally find that the harsh language, and frowning countenance, with which a command is uttered, are more irksome than the command itself. I would entreat you never to forget a line, which I doubt not you have often repeated to your children,

"Let love through all your actions run."

The nearer you live to their hearts, the more likely you are to impress them: for the words of our Saviour will apply in all their force to this case, "If ye love me ye will keep my commands." Constrain them to love you; and then their own affection will constrain them to obey you. A child sees no hope, and will generally feel no wish, to escape from a system of discipline, which springs entirely from the tenderness of his father. Parental authority should, to a considerable degree, resemble the magnet, which while it has all the hard inflexibility of the steel, acts only by the attractive influence of the loadstone.

And as this applies to the whole of domestic disci-

pline, so with peculiar force to the punitory part of it. If there be one act of paternal authority, which ought to display more affection than the rest, that act is correction: because there is no act so much in danger of misconstruction in the mind of the child: and if he be once impressed that his sufferings are inflicted more to gratify your resentment, than to cure his faults, he will be likely to feel towards you, as you would towards the surgeon, who, you were persuaded, tortured you for his pleasure, and not for your benefit. Let him be convinced that it cost you much anguish to inflict the least punishment: for as we sympathize with those around us in the feelings of their mind, a correction given in a rage will be generally received in a passion. Genuine repentance will be most likely to respond to genuine affection.

And here I would caution you against the injudicious conduct of those who substitute the divine threatenings of Scripture, for parental correction. To resort with a promptitude which has at last the effect of profaneness, to these awful ideas, on every recurrence of carelessness and perversity, is the way both to bring those ideas into contempt, and to make all faults appear equal. It is also obvious, that by trying this expedient on all occasions, parents will bring their authority into contempt. If they would not have that authority set at defiance, they must be able to point to immediate consequences, within their power to inflict on delinquency. Perhaps one of the most prudent rules respecting the enforcement, on the minds of children, of the conviction that they are accountable to an all-seeing, though unseen Governor, and liable to the punishment of obstinate guilt in a future state, is, to take opportunities of im-

pressing this idea the most cogently, at seasons when the children are not lying under any blame or displeasure, at moments of serious kindness on the parts of the parents, and serious inquisitiveness on the part of the children; leaving in some degree the conviction to have its own effect, greater or less, in any subsequent instance of guilt, according to the greater or less degree of aggravation which the child's own conscience can be made secretly to acknowledge in that guilt. And another obvious rule will be, that when a child is to be solemnly reminded of these religious sanctions in immediate connection with an actual instance of criminality in his conduct, that instance should be one of the most serious of his faults, and one which will bear the utmost seriousness of such an admonition."*

Discipline should respect each child in particular according to his disposition. In the same family, there may be a variety of tempers, which will require a varied method of treatment, in addition to the general principles of education which apply alike to all minds. And therefore, as the farmer consults the nature of his land, adapting the seed to the soil; and as the physician studies the constitution of his patient, suiting the remedy to the disease; so ought every parent to study the dispositions of all his children, that he may adapt his discipline to the peculiarities of their respective tempers. And it requires no great share of penetration to discover wherein those peculiarities consist; for as the sun is seen most clearly when rising and setting, so the tempers of mankind are discovered most distinctly in childhood and in old age. Almost every child has some predominant feature of mind, which should be most

* Vid. Eclectic Review, Vol. vi, page 21.

assiduously checked or cherished, as it is either amiable or hateful. All have their besetting sins, which will be likely to expose them, in future life, to peculiar danger; and which, in dependence on divine grace, the parent should endeavour to tear up as roots of poison; and they have some distinguishing traits of excellence, which should be seized as the helm of the mind, to steer it in safety through the dangers with which it is surrounded.

It may, perhaps, after all that I have said, be asked by some, what has this to do with religion? To this it might be sufficient to reply; Did not Jehovah, with most emphatic marks of his divine commendation, mention the order of Abraham's family? "I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment:" on the other hand, with what awful marks of divine displeasure did he punish the want of discipline in Eli's family! "In that day, I will perform against Eli all the things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin I will make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not. And therefore have I sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice, nor offering for ever." Heart-rending doom! Parents take warning.

But, that Discipline is connected with religion is plain: for what, in truth, is religion? Is it not choosing the will of God in preference to our own—bending our will to his absolute authority—implicitly obeying his commands—cheerfully acquiescing in his determinations without murmuring? and is not every parent to his

child in God's stead? and thus by being trained up to consider and obey the authority of his parent as absolute, the child is gradually taught to bow down to the will of Jehovah.

2. Instruction is the next branch of religious education. It would be quite needless to combat the absurdity of those who would have children left altogether untaught in religious opinion, until they arrive at years of mature judgment to choose for themselves their own creed. If religion were nothing but speculation—if the mind were inaccessible to sin and Satan till adult age—if the character could grow up lovely in the sight of God independently of the very means which he has established for this end—if a system of education, in which religion is totally neglected, be more likely to engage their attention to it hereafter, than one, where it is held up as an object of supreme importance—then admit the idea that no pains should be taken to teach them the principles of religion. Such a sentiment may do very well for those who hold the innocence and indifference of error; but not for those who believe that good conduct can be expected only from right principles.

I shall consider 1. The matter of Instruction.

And this must be the doctrines and the duties of revelation. Many think that only the preceptive part of Scripture should be taught to children: as if the morality of the Bible were in its own nature, or could be taught to us, totally independent of its doctrines. The foundation of all the precepts of the New Testament is laid in its great fundamental truths. The morality of the Christian religion is not of that flimsy kind which many imagine—it is not merely action; but action springing from good principles, flowing in a right direc-

tion, and tending to a proper end. To teach a child the Christian religion, and leave him ignorant of every truth which identifies its nature, by distinguishing it from every other system, is a deplorable manner of training him up, "in the fear, and nurture, and admonition of the Lord." You are bound by the sacred authority of God's word, to instruct your children in the knowledge of the divine character, as an omnipresent, omniscient, holy, just, wise, powerful, gracious being, the true God, and God of truth—in the character, the work, and the love of Christ—in the degenerate state of the human heart, with the necessity of an entire renovation of the mind, by the influence of the divine Spirit—in the way of acceptance with God, through faith in the great Mediator—in their accountability to God, as the judge of human conduct; and a future state of happiness and woe. Let not your minds be diverted from an attention to this important duty, by supposing that such points are entirely beyond the capacity of children; for, in addition to the observation that they think more than we are aware of, I may remark, that it is entirely a mistake to imagine, that in order to derive benefit from a doctrine revealed to our faith, it is necessary that we should comprehend that doctrine in its full extent. Who can grasp the thought of omnipresence, as an attribute of Jehovah? and yet, who may not derive the most extensive benefit from a belief of this unfathomable idea? And the same observation might be made with respect to many other important truths of revelation, the existence of which is all that is the object of faith, while the mode of that existence is left for the discoveries of eternity to unfold. But while I enjoin an attention to the foundation, I would be equally soli-

citous in calling your notice to the superstructure. Assiduously inculcate upon your offspring every relative and every social duty. Teach them that holiness is necessary both to our felicity on earth and in heaven; and that it includes every thing we owe to God as creatures and as sinners—every thing we owe to man, in all the different relationships by which we are connected with the human race.

2. The manner of religious instruction should also be regarded with attention. This of course, should be as much adapted to the capacity of the child as is possible. The historical parts of Scripture may be employed by every judicious parent, as a medium of conveying instruction to the youthful mind. Children are generally more attached to these parts of God's Word than to any other; and as they contain so many instances in which the anger and the grace of God are displayed, they should be pointed out as exemplifying the divine attributes and displaying in striking colours the degenerate state of the human heart: and when the characters of Scripture are set before us on one page, acting under the dreadful power of sin; and on the next, converted by the grace of God; they afford an opportunity of explaining what man is by nature, and what he must be by grace. In the conduct of eminent believers, and especially in the actions of our blessed Redeemer, are examples to which we might direct their attention for a view of Christian virtues. And by teaching them to observe the workings of their own minds, how much of the deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart, might they be brought to discover.

Catechizing, by the experience of all ages, has been proved to be an excellent method of communicating

religious knowledge: and what advantages do you possess in the incomparable productions of the children's spiritual friend, Dr. Watts! I should also advise you, not merely to allure your offspring to read the Word of God—which certainly ought to be most assiduously done—but also to learn *memoriter* select and impressive portions of Scripture. You thus give them a Bible in their minds, which they may find of essential service to them, long after they have lost that which you committed into their hands. To enliven the task, one of Dr. Watts's hymns should be occasionally taught; but, for the most important of all reasons, because it is the Word of God, I would have their memory chiefly stored with Scripture.

Instruction should not be confined merely to stated seasons, as in other branches of education; but it ought to occupy a considerable share of the common conversation of the parent. I greatly fear that there are multitudes of Christian parents who never open their lips to their children on the subject of religion, except on a Sabbath-day evening: this grand and important topic, all the rest of the week, is "lost in silence and forgot." And is not this training them up to follow to perdition the millions who have plunged into remediless ruin, by the mistake, that godliness is only a Sunday's concern; a thing to be put on and off with the Sabbath day's dress? Observe, I entreat you, the method which Infinite Wisdom has prescribed for this interesting duty: "Thou shalt teach these words diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." The occurrences of every day, of every hour,

would present a proper occasion of instructive observation. Afflictions, and remarkable dispensations of mercy, which follow each other in our own, or in our neighbour's circumstances, in such rapid succession; the ravages of disease, the visits of death, which in this mortal state are scenes so frequently before our eyes; these and innumerable other events may, by a judicious, holy parent, be made the constant preachers of religion: and when it is thus taught, it is represented as an every day's concern.

Still, I do not mean to say, that for a work so important and interesting as that which I am now enforcing, there should be no stated seasons. Among various other gracious and wise purposes for which the Sabbath was instituted, one is, that we might have more than ordinary time to attend to the religious instruction of our families: and O how many things combine to render this a season peculiarly suitable. Then, when entirely detached from worldly concerns—when the parent's own mind is devoutly impressed with the supreme excellence and importance of eternal things, by looking through the vail of ordinances into eternity itself—when he returns to the bosom of his family, with all the savour of religion on his mind—when he has just been stimulated to parental duty, and animated with the sweet theme of parental encouragement—when the subjects of public discussion form a topic for private instruction—then let every father, every mother, not squander away the precious moments which occur between the public services of the day; not trifle away the golden season by frivolous, idle conversation; but, dividing their little charge between them, endeavour to lead their minds to God.

Here I must also seriously admonish you to attend to the spirit as well as to the letter of instruction. In this particular, I must again express my fears that many parents are criminally neglectful. Instruction itself is but a means to an important end: that end is impression—serious, lasting, deep impression. Religion is a thing to be felt, as well as known. It is not merely an outward form, but an inward principle: but, alas! this is forgotten by multitudes, as it applies to themselves; and by multitudes more, as it applies to their children. One would be led to imagine, from a survey of their actions, either that their offspring were naturally incapable of feeling the power of true piety, or that it was no part of their duty, as parents, to endeavour that they should experience this influence. The only faculty of their children's mind which many attempt to bring under the control of religion, is the memory; and with others, who rise one step above them, the highest object of their pursuit is to give them real knowledge, without attending at all to its influence upon their heart and conscience. It is flattering, no doubt, to a parent's vanity, to hear a child astonish us by the strength of his memory, in repeating catechism and hymns; but what does it profit his immortal soul, if repetition be all that he is taught? For my part, "I would rather hear him speak five words with his understanding, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." It is with them, as with ourselves, "Though they understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have no love, they are nothing." To have a knowledge of the theory of religion without an experience of its influence upon the heart, is only walking to the bottomless pit with the torch of truth in our right hand. If, then, you would

come up to the scriptural standard of religious education, admonish them with earnest, affectionate, persevering entreaty, "To remember their Creator in the days of their youth."

I should particularly recommend separate advice to each child alone. General addresses are frequently evaded by the very persons to whom they are directed: we are apt to hide ourselves in a crowd; and are too much engaged in applying reproof to others, to remember how suitable it is to us: thus using their guilt as a broad, impenetrable shield, to ward off the arrows of conviction from ourselves. Take your children separately into your closet; and there, when they can find no shelter from reproof, no shield against conviction, no possibility of forgetting that they are the single objects of parental advice and affection; there pray with them and for them; there pour out to God the wishes of your heart on their behalf; there entreat them to cheer their parent's heart by choosing the God of their fathers as their portion and their friend. Oh! the moving, melting power of such admonition!

And, as you wish not to counteract all the efforts which you are using for the salvation of your children, do not teach them to think lightly of the work and character of their public instructors. Convince them that these are seeking, in public, what you are in private, their eternal happiness. Take them constantly to the house of God, and instruct them to listen with solemn attention to the exhortations which come from the pulpit. Never, never, in their hearing, indulge a criticising, captious spirit, or you will soon induce them to believe that they go to the house of God only as fault-catchers. "If you take a malignant pleasure in flinging

your censures on your minister, and cavilling at his discourses, you are scattering round your families the seeds of damnation, and are not to wonder when you see them gathering the fruits, by despising religion, and preferring a novel, or a play, to those sermons which you have taught them to revile."

3. If you would give either meaning or force to any thing you say, add to instruction a Holy and Suitable Example.

We are all, to a very considerable degree, influenced by example, and especially children: for during the minority of judgment, imitation is the regent of the soul; and those that are least capable of reason, are most swayed by example. They are remarkably acute in observing the slightest deviations in others from those precepts which are enjoined upon them, and more readily believe their eyes than their ears. Example derives much of its force from these three circumstances: the regard we feel for the person in whom it is exhibited; the agreement of our taste with his conduct; and the frequency which we possess of witnessing that conduct: and when these things all combine, we are irresistibly carried away by their force, like the little rivulet swelling into the mighty torrent of the mountain. Parents, remember that all these circumstances meet in your example, to give it power over the minds of your offspring, if your conduct be any way inconsistent with your profession as Christians. Such, alas! is the degeneracy of man by nature, that evil has abundantly more power over us than good; it falls in with the current of the heart; hence there is in their minds a principle which gives amazing force to everything wrong in your conduct; for, at the same time, it is an example always

before their eyes, and the example of one whom duty constrains and nature prompts them to love. They are much more likely to do as you do than as you say. While they are able to reply, "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" all the convictions which you would fasten upon their minds will bound off, like arrows from an impenetrable shield.

And I am fearful that it is too necessary to say something on the nature of that example which every Christian parent should place before the eyes of his children. It is not sufficient that the copy be without the foul and dismal blots of immorality; it must exhibit all the lines and characters of the beauties of holiness: a mere blank may not teach them any flagrant vice, but it will not instruct them in any spiritual excellence. The example of many seems only to guard their offspring against going to perdition in the broad high road of profanity, while it leaves all the more secret, though not less ruinous paths of destruction open to their choice. I should recommend, as a most important point, a constant, unaffected, unostentatious display of eminently spiritual religion—a line of conduct, throughout the whole of which, true godliness is seen to reign; in which there should be knowledge guiding affection—the ardour of the Christian, without the wildness of the enthusiast—holy joyfulness, without sinful levity—exemplary holiness, without monkish gloom—vigilance in serving God, without indolence in worldly avocations—piety towards Jehovah, blended with meekness, benevolence, and affection towards mankind—religion surrounding with its radiant glory, the father, the husband, the master, and the neighbour; like the brilliant gem, sparkling amidst the

polished gold—in short, morality, in all its branches, springing from sterling godliness. There should be uninterrupted consistency of conduct. A Christian in the church, a worldling every where else—a saint at the family altar and a cruel tyrant at the family table—always at public worship and never in private—fawning and courteous towards the richer brethren, and contemptuous towards the poor—one day all for God, and the next, all for the world, Satan, and self;—such an example as this, if it do any thing, will do mischief—for your children will soon find out whether there be consistency in your conduct; and a defect here will counteract all the influence of partial and occasional godliness. I entreat you therefore to consider the importance of consistent spiritual religion; for as your offspring very soon understand that divine aphorism, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" if they hear and see nothing in your conduct, except on a Sabbath day, that directs their minds to eternal objects, they can hardly be persuaded that those objects engage much of your affection. When they see you so absorbed in worldly concerns, as to secure scarcely any time for the duties of the closet or the family, running through them with negligent haste, sometimes omitting them altogether, what can they imagine, but that religion is merely a thing to talk about. If you thus convert your house into a temple of Mammon, can you wonder to see them growing up the worshippers of that idol, which, by your conduct, you have taught them to adore? When they see you indulging in as much conformity to the world as you can, without giving up the very profession of Christianity, what force will your exhortation carry with it, when you thus ad-

monish them, "Be ye not conformed to this world?" When your house is never the resort of the righteous, but only of the gay, the worldly, and the rich, how can you expect that they will listen to your advice, to choose only the saints as their companions?

If then, you would wish your children to go to heaven, do not think merely of sending them there, but lead them; for, as Archbishop Tillotson observes, "to give them good instruction, and a bad example, is but beckoning to them with the head, to shew them the way to heaven, while we take them by the hand, and lead them in the way to hell."

Before I leave this part of my discourse, I would also insist upon the necessity of not only setting them good examples at home, but of using the utmost caution that they be not exposed to the contagion of bad example abroad. It should therefore be your business to select for them suitable companions. "He that walketh with wise men, shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." One bad associate, negligently admitted to your children, may be the first step to irretrievable ruin. Many a wretch, from the scaffold, has traced back his infamy to this source: and many, in a still more dreadful situation, are cursing the day in which they first formed an unsuitable connection with a companion who led them astray from God.

Of course, this establishes also, the importance of choosing a proper person to superintend the general education of your children. I wish there were no just ground for reproach on many Christian parents, for neglecting this momentous subject. It is a lamentable fact, to the existence of which the experience of multitudes can testify, that one single week at school has

frequently effaced from the mind the good impressions which were the result of years of parental solicitude and instruction at home. There is scarcely one single act of a parent's conduct which requires so much holy caution as the choice of a school, and yet with many persons scarcely one that receives so little. What a shameful dereliction is it, both of Christian principle and parental care, to make choice of a situation for the benefit of a few showy and useless accomplishments, or, at best, literary advantages, where the Soul, the Immortal Soul, is the last object of regard. Christian fathers and mothers! how can ye ask of God with any degree of confidence, that he would save your children from being devoured by the roaring lion, when you yourselves have thrown them into his very den?

4. Let it not be supposed that any system of education can be complete without Prayer.

"Every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down from the Father of lights." Without the sacred influence of the Divine Spirit, the most judicious, affectionate, and persevering efforts will fall short of the desired end. It is, however, an encouraging thought, that, as no heart is so hardened by age and sin but that the omnipotent grace of God can renovate it, so there is none so tender in childhood but that he can inscribe upon it his name and his image. He can, and does sometimes, in the most spiritual sense of the phrase, "sanctify from the womb." Let us therefore "pray without ceasing;" since it holds as true, with respect to children, as to the most aged and obstinate transgressor, that "Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase." Not one soul was ever converted to God independently of his grace. This

work is entirely his own, yet he generally performs it by blessing human means. But I need not enlarge on this head, as it is, perhaps, that part of parental duty which is less neglected than any other by real Christians. Multitudes pray, who do nothing else; but let such remember that we must seek as well as ask.

Having thus considered the means which should be used by every Christian parent for the salvation of his children, I will,

III. Exhibit the Encouragement which the Scriptures afford, that such exertion will be blessed to the accomplishment of their desired end.

How frequently is it the case, that when we admonish you to the use of such means as I have mentioned, you turn away and exclaim, "Ah! but we cannot give grace to our children." Sometimes this is the apology of indolence and cruel indifference. You do not act thus with respect to their bodies, although it is as much beyond your power to make their food nourishing as it is to make the means of salvation useful; and no one could stand acquitted of the charge of murder, who starved his child, because he could not bless his food. But this exclamation is sometimes the result of ignorance and error; and thus, through mistaken views of divine truth, many go with a forlorn hope to that work which affords the greatest encouragement to success. One would be led to suppose from such persons that education, carried on with a view to real religion, were an experiment upon the human mind altogether beyond the directions of Scripture; and the success of which was not only doubtful, but very unlikely. What then, does the Word of God give us no encouragement to attempt the salvation of our children?

Has Jehovah, ever attentive in other things to the happiness of his people, passed over in profound silence a subject which involves so much of their comfort? Has he given us no ground to hope that our exertions will be blessed? Has he left our hearts to be tossed about upon an ocean of doubt and agitation without a rudder or a compass? Certainly not. His Word is full of encouragement. Every thing warrants the expectation that an affectionate, diligent, scriptural system of education will be blessed to the salvation of our offspring. The Divine Promise, the Divine Command, and the Divine Conduct, all encourage such a hope.

1. The Divine Promise leads us to expect that the blessing of God will rest upon those who are properly trained up in his fear.

Was there ever a dispensation of mercy to this guilty world which did not bear a favourable aspect on the children of believers? Did not the Adamic, the Patriarchal, the Mosaic editions of the covenant of grace, each smile upon the seed of the righteous, and gather them under its wings? Nor does the cross of Christ, while it greets with infinite benignity the penitent parent, approaching it as to the asylum of the sinner, frown upon his child. Oh no! There is to us the same encouragement to carry our children to that cross, and while we receive salvation from it ourselves, point them to the bleeding sacrifice, as there was to the poisoned Israelite, to carry his serpent-bitten child to the brazen signal, and while he himself received life through the appointed means, to direct the eye of his babe to the source of health. How frequently, under the Jewish state, was that gracious promise repeated to the church, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy

seed after thee:" every succeeding age echoed it back to the past, and still

> "Engrav'd, as in eternal brass,
> The mighty promise shines."

It was a promise not peculiar to Judaism. It was the soul of that system which the Roman Emperor buried beneath the ruins of Jerusalem—a soul that could not die—which does not lie interred in the tomb of the old covenant, but which took its flight into the more exalted regions of Christianity when the body in which it had long dwelt was slain at the command of God: for it is, in short, "the covenant that was CONFIRMED of God in Christ." Hence we find the same promise frequently repeated on the pages of the New Testament. "Repent," said the apostle Peter, on the illustrious day of Pentecost, "and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: For the promise is unto you and to your children." And we find another of the apostles using the same language. Paul, when the affrighted jailor exclaimed, "What shall I do to be saved?" replied; "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And, indeed, did not our blessed Redeemer himself imply all that is intended in this gracious promise, when he displayed the brightest glory of his condescension, by "taking young children in his arms, and blessing them, and saying, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.'"

This promise, when its true import is explained, will be found to afford the most abundant encouragement to the hope of every Christian parent concerning his children. And in illustrating it, I would observe that,

whatever be its true meaning, it must be something applicable to believers, as such; or, in other words, it is a promise made to the faith of a believing parent.

Now, according to this rule of interpretation, it must mean something more than that our children, when they arrive at years of discretion, shall, if they seek the blessings of salvation, obtain the object of their pursuit. This may be implied, but it certainly cannot be all that is implied; for, if so, the promise contains nothing but what applies as truly to the most blasphemous infidel, as to the most holy believer; for it is as certain as the oath of God can make it, that his children, if they call upon Jehovah, shall be heard and blessed. Besides, if this be all that is intended by such a declaration, then that part of the promise which relates to our children is altogether unnecessary, as it gives us not one more sentiment of consolation concerning them, than what we gain from those general declarations of Scripture which promise salvation to all who believe. And is it likely that God would so frequently and so particularly mention our children, and that in a way so calculated to raise our expectation, if in the distribution of his favours he had no peculiar respect to them?

Nor does this promise teach us merely, that, if our children die in infancy, they shall be saved with an everlasting salvation. This is certainly implied; and oh! how much does the consolatory truth assist in abating the deluge of distress which threatens to overwhelm the mind of those who are called to embalm with their tears the lifeless clay of a once lovely babe! The pious Psalmist's words have often poured the balm of consolation into the wounds of separation: "I shall go to him, but he will not come to me." Still, however, I

do not think that the peculiar emphasis of the promise lies in this; for there is nothing in the Word of God which proves that any infants, dying such, are eternally lost. I am inclined to the charitable side of this question; for if, by a federal relationship to Adam, they participate, without actual sin, in the penal consequences of his guilt, they may, for aught I see to the contrary, be so federally related to Christ, without actual faith, as to participate in the gracious benefits of his death.* We have therefore found nothing yet, nor is there anything to be found, in this promise, peculiar to believers, except we admit that it holds out a pleasing encouragement to us, that if we use all suitable means to bring our children to a saving knowledge of God, he will bless those means, and in due time "reveal himself to them, as he does not to the world."

I do not mean to say that it warrants a confident assurance, or even an expectation independent of our exertions; but that this declaration holds out sufficient encouragement to promote the most vigorous exertions for the salvation of our children, with hope that those exertions will be crowned with that divine blessing which alone can render any means effectual.

Christian parents! contemplate the promise in this point of view; and does it not act upon your minds like the vernal sun upon the farmer, which invites him to the field, smiles upon him as he guides the plough, or casts the seed, and encourages his brightest hopes? Let it melt the icy fetters of despondency, let it suppress the hopeless sigh, let it rouse the sacred energies of your soul, let it send you to your work, not with a tear but a song.

* Vid. Rom. v., from 12 to end.

2. The Divine Command warrants this expectation. We certainly have some ground to expect the possession of a blessing, which is to be obtained, in the use of certain means, when we are really using the very means which God himself has appointed for that purpose. For while he leaves ample room for the exercise of his own wise sovereignty, he certainly does not mean to mock us by setting us upon the performance of certain actions, which have no tendency, no connection, no end. It is the property of folly, and not of consummate wisdom, to act without rule and without design. Indeed, the expectation which I am endeavouring to excite, you indulge with respect to almost all other ordinances. Why, when your eyes look round upon a crowded auditory, sitting under the sound of the Gospel, why thrills your heart with this delightful sentiment, "Surely some wanderers from God and bliss will be gathered into the fold of Christ to-night?" Is it not for these two reasons, that God has appointed the preaching of the Gospel for the conversion of sinners, and that there is a fitness between the means and the end? Is it not for the same reasons that you expect to be edified by prayer, reading the Scriptures, sitting down at the table of the Lord, hearing sermons? Why then should the religious education of children be the only ordinance which fails to produce expectation of success. That it is an ordinance of God, is evident from his Word; for was it not under the spirit of inspiration that Solomon exhorted you "to train up a child in the way he should go," and that Paul said, "Ye fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?" And that the means are suited to the end needs no proof. Take heed, then, of dishonouring God, by thinking lightly of his institutions.

3. This expectation is strengthened by a review of the Divine Conduct.

Look at the church of God. Of whom is it chiefly composed? Do we not find that a very large proportion of its members are the seed of the righteous? For while the curse of God, like the air of a pestilence, enters invisibly into the families of the wicked, the blessing of God, like the light of heaven, silently descends into the habitation of the just. As the oil poured on the head of Aaron, which flowed down to the skirts of his garment, so have we often seen the blessing of God flowing from the parent down to the meanest branch of the household. I acknowledge that, frequently, Jehovah "calls those to be a people who were not a people; for he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth;" but, generally, he raises up the son in the stead of the father. The church, like the fabled phœnix, seems to grow old, expire, and from its own ashes send forth a successor. The instances of conversion in advanced age, compared with those which take place in early life, are rare; and, indeed, many of those which do occur, seem to be only the resurrection of impressions long buried under a heap of youthful passions and worldly cares. How often have we heard the rapturous exclamation of the Christian father, "Rejoice with me, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The prodigal left his father's house, but could not leave altogether his parent's instructions; these, although apparently lost to him, were still in the keeping of his conscience. The sun of prosperity shone out its day, and then sunk down behind the hills of dissipation, and the night of affliction, dreary and tempestuous, followed;

and this was the time for conscience to do its work: then, amidst the surrounding darkness, rose in rapid succession the long forgotten counsels of parental solicitude; and the very instructions which he once shunned as his enemies, were embraced by him as his guides, to lead him to his father and his God.

These observations, of course, apply only to those places where Christianity is known and professed; for when the Gospel comes to a people who have long sat in darkness, we may expect numerous converts of all ages; but when it has been long preached in purity and plenty, when ordinances have been regularly kept up, few, comparatively speaking, but those who are called in early life, are ever called at all. Mr. Baxter, in some part of his works, has this opinion, that if family instruction were properly and generally maintained, preaching would soon cease to be the common method of conversion. This sentiment, although it be certainly rather hyperbolical, deserves regard. And it is corroborative of all that I have said, that most of those who are recorded on the page of inspiration as eminent for piety, were called by God in early life; such, for instance, as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Josiah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, Daniel, John the Baptist, Timothy; and no other reason, says the judicious Witherspoon, has ever yet been given for our Saviour's distinguishing John the apostle by particular marks of affection, except that he was the youngest of the twelve.*

And here it will not be amiss to observe, that the very expectation itself which I am now encouraging, has considerable influence in attaining the desired end.

* See Witherspoon's Sermons, vol. 4.

Is it not one of those means which God frequently uses in the salvation of the children of his people? In a thousand instances we perceive that, when God intends to bestow a great and signal benefit, he first excites a cheerful expectation and desire. Do we not learn from his Word that the chief qualification, if so it may be called, for receiving many of his favours, is the earnestness of our desire, and the firmness of our expectation of them? Generally speaking, the most hopeful parent will be the most successful one. A mind paralysed with despair, or even benumbed with despondency, is likely to do very little in the way of beneficial exertion. It is an old, but it is a very true proverb, "He that thinks he works for a song, is not very likely to sing at his work;" and it may be said concerning religion, as well as of everything else, that hopelessness and lifelessness are a wedded pair. Hence, when the breast of the Christian parent beats high with the pleasing expectation of seeing his efforts crowned with the salvation of his child, what fervour does such a hope impart to his prayers! what delight, what animation, what patience, to all his exertions! On the other hand, how dull, laborious, and irksome are those endeavours which are carried on with a fearful despondency of success!

But now, what shall I answer to the objection which some, perhaps, may oppose to all that I have said, by asking, "Is not this reasoning against fact; for do we not see the children of many eminent believers living 'without God and without hope in the world?' Do we not read of such instances in Scripture? Was it not the case with the very child for whom the prayer which forms the text was uttered?"

It is painful to force the wounded spirits of those

who are conscious of sinful neglect, to bring sufficient arguments to confute this objection. Many, I am persuaded, are feeling all the agony of a bleeding heart, in seeing their children walking in the broad road to destruction; to whom it may seem an unnecessary and wanton renewal of their anguish, to hear it said that the dagger which wounded them was their own neglect. But, for the instruction of others it must be declared, that many, very many of the instances alluded to, may be traced to parental delinquency. Look into the practice of Christian parents in general, and you will not search long without finding various obstacles to the success of religious education. By how many are the means of instruction totally neglected, with how many more is it nothing else than a lifeless form; a part of the employment which is destined to fill up the hours of the Sabbath not devoted to public worship! The relaxation of domestic discipline with some; the opposite extreme of undue severity in others; the limitation of instruction to principles, while their influence on the heart and character is disregarded; the unsuitable temper and conduct of many who impart the best instructions; the neglect of choosing proper companions, schools, and situations in life for children;* these, and various other sinful defects are sufficient to account for a very large proportion of the cases, to which I have been directed by the objection.

And if you refer to the examples produced from Scripture, in which the children of the righteous knew not the God of their fathers, you will find some glaring impropriety in parental conduct. Who can wonder to

* See these obstacles ably illustrated in a Sermon by Dr. Winter, on this very subject.

read of the crimes committed by Hophni and Phinehas, when he recollects the want of discipline in Eli's family? Who is surprised to hear the sorrowful accents of David's confession, "My house is not so with God," when he considers the awful backslidings of that great man, and reads, besides this, "that he had never displeased the wicked Adonijah, by saying, why hast thou done so?" Did not a wicked Esau descend from a partial father, and Simeon and Levi from an indulgent one? And with respect to Ishmael, his circumstances were so peculiar that his future conduct forms no objection whatever to the principle which I have endeavoured to establish.

Still, however, it must be admitted that there are not a few instances in which the most judicious system of education has been quite unsuccessful. The most affectionate discipline, the most scriptural instructions, the most holy example, the most fervent prayer, have sometimes proved no obstacles, or at least but ineffectual ones, in the career of a profligate child; and where this is unhappily the case, we can only recommend to such afflicted parents the consolation of David, who, even upon this dark and dismal cloud, saw as it were the beauteous colours of the rainbow, the emblem of the covenant, and exclaimed, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; for this is my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Such cases only prove that God is a sovereign in the distribution of his favours, but do not at all destroy the connection which he himself has established between the means and the end: they do not disprove the sentiment as a general principle, but

only prove that it is not an invariable rule: they excite just so much fear as is sufficient to preserve our hope from degenerating into unwarrantable presumption.

I will now conclude by addressing

1. Those parents who altogether neglect the religious education of their children. Unnatural fathers! wicked mothers! I address you as the advocate of those whom you are solemnly bound by every tie of nature and religion to conduct to the highest bliss of which their nature is susceptible, but whom your cruel neglect abandons to the most exquisite misery which they can possibly endure. This is a species of cruelty to be found no where else in the whole universe but in your breast; every other creature teaches its young to seek the highest good which their nature can enjoy, and to exercise the chief faculties of which it is capable. "The sea monsters draw out their breast to their young. The eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings. The young lions roar after their prey and seek their meat," taught by the parent beast; while you habitually neglect to instruct your offspring in every thing which can establish and perpetuate their real felicity. But for the kind instruction of some benevolent stranger, or the mere accident of their falling into association with others better taught than themselves, your children would to this hour have remained almost entirely ignorant that they had a soul, or that it was necessary to make any effort for its salvation. "You would not have your love for them suspected; but wretched indeed are those children who share only in a solicitude which asks, 'What shall they eat; what shall they drink; or wherewithal shall they be clothed?'

What is the body to the soul? What is time to eternity? What is it to dispose of them advantageously in life, and leave them unprepared for death; unprovided for a new, a never-ending, a changeless period of existence? Are you the instruments of bringing these hapless beings into existence only barbarously to sacrifice them? Such parents are more cruel than Herod. He slew the children of others, these slay their own, he only destroyed the body, these destroy the soul, his victims died innocent, and were doubtless saved: these parents will not suffer their offspring to die innocent: by their unkind care they guard them till the season of safety is elapsed, till they are become accountable and criminal, and expose them when they know their death will be attended with their damnation."* Permit me to mention to you one of the cruel practices of the ancient Carthaginians. They had a detestable idol, to which they offered up their children in sacrifice, and which was so formed that an infant put into its hands stretched out to receive it, would immediately fall into a gulph of fire. The mothers themselves performed the dreadful rites, by giving their own offspring into the hands of the idol, and always thought it an unfortunate omen if the little victim were offered weeping, and therefore by apparently fond kisses and caresses endeavoured to extort a smile at the dreadful moment when it was given into the hands of the hideous image. You shudder at the recital. You call such parents savage monsters. But pause for a moment, and enquire if there be nothing like this in your conduct. Is not sin an idol more dreadful still? Are not its hands ever stretched out to receive its unhappy victims? Is there not a gulph of

* Mr. Jay.

fire below, to receive them as they drop from its grasp? Are you not sacrificing your children to this dreadful idol? Is not all your anxiety for their temporal interest, while you neglect their souls, only a cruel solicitude that they may pass smiling into the hands of the destroyer? Imagine, said Mr. Flavel, that you had carried the plague into your family, and lived to witness your children lie dying by the walls of your house, surely if not possessed of a tiger's heart, such a spectacle must pierce you to the very soul. Oh consider! that very scene, only of a moral kind, is before you: your children are infected with the plague of the heart, and they derived the disease from you. Yes, they have derived from you a depraved nature, and can ye witness them with indifference sinking into eternal death through the malady which they caught first from you? Can ye be satisfied to have been thus accessory to their ruin, and now make no effort by religious instruction to stop the spreading contagion? What cruelty! What barbarity! If nothing else will move you to a consideration of this subject, permit me now to direct your view forward to that time when the guilt and punishment of such neglect will be felt in all their tremendous weight. The solemn period is rapidly approaching when you must meet those very children at the bar of a justly offended God, whose souls form no object of your present regard. It will be a dreadful interview. No language can describe, no imagination can conceive the horrors of that scene when they, dreadful idea, shall be your most violent and bitter accusers. In addition to all the weight and torment of your own curse, what exquisite anguish will your hearts feel when such language as this issues from the lips of your now loving and beloved child. "There

stand the guilty beings whom I once honoured as my parents, but whom I now execrate as the murderers of my immortal soul! Cruel monsters! Is this the end of your parental affection? See to what misery of your own offspring ye have been instrumental. What avails it now that ye provided for me a fortune? Riches, honours, pleasures, are now for ever gone. Why kept ye me in fatal ignorance of religion? Why did ye choose for me only such companions as would be fellow-workers with you in the dreadful business of my ruin? When did you ever admonish me to seek the Lord? Had you attended to my soul, as you ought to have done, instead of training me up in the way of ignorance, pride, and wickedness, I might have now been with yonder happy throng, and not thus branded with the infamy and horror of the divine curse. Since ye have dragged me into the vortex of perdition, ye have only brought me to be your eternal tormentor; for while I feel any sense of the happiness which I have for ever lost, or of the misery to which I am for ever condemned, I shall never cease to execrate the names of those who had so large a share in my damnation." Avoid this dreadful scene. Escape, I beseech you, this terrible accusation. But ah! what can I expect from you, with respect to the souls of your children, while your own are neglected, abandoned, and despised! Here the mischief begins. You see no danger in your own condition as a sinner, and are not likely to see any in theirs. You feel no joy, you perceive no beauty, you estimate no worth in religion, and how can we expect that you should recommend it to them. Ignorant, you cannot teach; blind, you cannot guide; dead, you cannot animate. In your own pursuits the salvation of the soul is

the last object of desire and exertion, and it is not probable that you will make it the first in your attention to them. Begin, then, I entreat you, this interesting, this important, this necessary duty, by fleeing to the Saviour for that mercy which you have hitherto despised. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." Do not, I beseech you, by neglecting religion, as with the same fatal dagger, commit suicide on your own soul, and murder on the souls of your children. But rather like Noah, enter into the ark provided against the deluge of divine wrath, taking with you your sons and your daughters.

2. Christian parents! ye whose greatest felicity in the possession of children is derived from devoting them to God, and training them up for him, I earnestly admonish you to go forward in this good work. A variety of motives might be adduced to urge on your persevering and vigilant exertions; but I will now name only one, and that shall be, the Prospect and Consequences of Success. What if God should hear your prayer! What if Ishmael should live before him! What if you should soon encircle in the arms of affection, children doubly yours, yours by the ties of nature, and also by the bonds of religion! O with what sacred raptures of delight will you mark the dawn of reason, followed by the day of grace! O to see the character of the man gradually forming under the influence and guidance of true piety! What new pleasure will you derive from all your intercourse with your children, when you realise in them your fellow soldiers in the Christian combat, your fellow labourers in the Christian employ, your fellow travellers in the Christian pilgrimage, and your fellow heirs to the Christian inheritance.

Now you feel considerable joy in leading them in your hand to the house of God, and hearing them join the sacred melody of the service, with lisping and perhaps unmeaning praises; but what is this to the joy which you will experience when you hear them exclaiming from choice, "I was glad when they said unto me let us go up into the house of the Lord?" What new pleasure and interest will you find in our social meetings for prayer, when your own sons are the leaders of your devotion, and your advocates with God! With what fresh relish will you partake of the sacred Supper, when the very next guests at the table are your own children! With what pleasing emotions will you bow before the family altar, when you seem to hear the sincere and fervent Amen responding to your petitions from the lips of your worshipping offspring! What delight will thrill through your soul, when in your own closet you hear the soft murmurs of their secret devotions, sounding like the sweet intercourse of God and man! And when many a heartbroken parent sees his profligate son issuing forth to the midnight revel, or reeling home with the vacant stare of the drunkard, and the lascivious appearance of the debauchee, you will see yours retiring to commune with God, or descending from the mount, with his face shining with the glory of Jehovah. Should prosperity be your lot, and a kind Providence bless all your exertions, with what pleasure will you lay up the overplus wealth, after religion and humanity have received their proportion, recollecting that it is for those who will not squander it away in the pleasures of sin, but who will use it in part for the support of the Gospel and the alleviation of human sorrow. Or should adversity be your inheritance, how soothing to all your griefs

will it be to hail to the sorrowful abode your own children with the language of Scripture, "How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith thy God reigneth," and thus receive the consolations of the Gospel at their hands. Should God call you to weep around their dying beds, and close their eyes in death, you will assuage the anguish of separation, by recollecting that a few more rolling years will unite you with them, to part no more. Or perhaps you may be called to take the precedence in death and glory; then I see you struggling amidst the agonies of dissolution, yet cheered and supported, not only with the near approach of all those brilliant prospects which faith holds up to your view, but also with the sweet assurance that your children are following on in the same road to endless rest. I see you in your last encounter, as you fall beneath the stroke of death, smiling, through joy, that your sons are nobly fighting in the same field and under the same banner. The progress of time soon sends your children after you. One after another you welcome them to the celestial city, and conduct them into the presence of the Lamb; till at length, the happy number all arrived, I see you presenting the dear objects of parental affection, and the sweet reward of parental duty, before the presence of his glory, with this grateful and adoring language, "Behold me and the children which thou hast given me." O what imagination, in its most vigorous sallies, ever yet could form any tolerable conception of the bliss which attends the meeting of a family in heaven! Like shipwrecked mariners who have survived the fury of the storm, assembling on the shore of safety, with what

mutual and delightful salutations will they congratulate each other! There they shall meet beyond the power or the fear of separation; there they shall renew their wonted communion, without any of those imperfections which disturbed it upon earth; there they shall feel their mutual attachment drawing them closer to each other, as they draw nearer to the central point of their affection; there they shall adore and triumph together, with the innumerable company that encircle the throne for ever; and there, as united fires brighten each other's blaze, and as many concordant sounds make the finer harmony, so their union in bliss will make the heaven of each the more delightful. "It will be joy which no eye hath seen, no ear heard, and which hath never entered into the heart of man to conceive." Amen.

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN QUEEN ST. MEETING HOUSE, WOLVERHAMPTON,

AT THE FORMATION OF THE STAFFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT MINISTERS AND CHURCHES,

DECEMBER 27TH, 1814.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work."

1 Corinthians xv, 58.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

The chapter which closes with the exhortation in the text, is one of the sublimest pieces of composition ever written by an inspired or uninspired pen. It throws a blaze of radiance upon the darkness of the tomb, and predicts the utter demolition of his throne, who, in language of gloomy majesty, is denominated the king of terrors. The apostle, like a wise master-builder, has founded the duty of Christian zeal upon the doctrine of the resurrection. The belief of this great event, connected as it is with a state of eternal existence beyond the grave, is the source of all those sleepless energies which move in the soul of the Christian philanthropist. His activity is the result of that faith "which is the substance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." "I believed, and therefore have I spoken," is his reply to every one who enquires for the motive of his actions. A lurking doubt of this truth is the paralysis of zeal. How can he be persuaded to seek either his own salvation or the spiritual benefit of others, who fears that the streams of his piety and pity

are rolling forward like the waters of the Jordan, to be lost in the sea of death? In proportion as we firmly believe and steadily contemplate the grand and impressive scenes described in this remarkable chapter, all the springs of Christian activity will be set in motion. Lukewarmness, wherever it prevails, must be attributed to the want or the weakness of faith.

The apostle having brought before the imagination of the Corinthians the awful scenery of the last day; having sounded in their ears the blast of the archangel's trump, and presented to their eyes the countless millions of the dead bursting into life, delivers, under the impression of these events, the exhortation in the text.

In the consideration of which, I will first explain the nature of the duty here stated. We are commanded to do "the work of the Lord."

Whatever the Word of God has enjoined, whether it be a duty more immediately relating to ourselves, or to others, might, in a general sense, be considered the work of the Lord, as being the service we owe to Christ, our divine Master. Still, I apprehend that a more definite meaning attaches to the present use of the expression. Here it refers to Christian zeal. It is an exhortation to activity in the cause of Christ at large, an injunction requiring us to advance the glory of the Redeemer, by promoting the spread and the influence of his gospel in the earth. In the very next chapter the phrase is undoubtedly employed to express this idea: "Now if Timotheus come unto you, see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord as I also do." Let no one, however, imagine that he can do anything acceptable unto the Lord in the way of zeal, except his zeal be the offspring of true

faith. Our first duty is our own salvation. We must first "give our own selves to the Lord." To attempt to do his work till we are reconciled to God by the blood of his cross, is but to thrust ourselves amongst his servants while we are yet his enemies. The exertions of an unconverted man in the cause of Christ, with whatever benefit they may be attended to others—for we deny not that in some instances God employs the instrumentality of the wicked—will to himself be profitless and vain. There is just ground of apprehension, that in an age happily characterised by an enlightened and vigorous activity, not a few will be found guilty of the ruinous inconsistency of contributing to send the gospel to others, while their own hearts are strangers to its influence; and thus resemble the workmen of Noah, who helped to build an ark for others, but perished in the flood themselves. No liberality, however diffusive, no zeal, however ardent, can be a substitute for "repentance towards God, faith in Jesus Christ, and that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Should we ultimately perish for want of these great and necessary prerequisites for heaven, will it assuage the agony of the deathless worm, or allay the fury of the quenchless fire, or render the bottomless pit more tolerable, to remember that we had been the means of plucking others from the place of torment? Oh no! even in the presence of Satan we shall blush for the hypocrisy, and curse the folly of choosing heaven for others, and hell for ourselves. A personal and experimental acquaintance with the gospel must be the starting point in the career of religious benevolence. Thus qualified let us do the work of the Lord. In assigning a few reasons why this employment is so denominated,

I shall be advancing, at the same time, the most powerful motives that can induce a real Christian to engage in it.

1. It is work in which the Lord himself was employed. In attempting to extend the empire of truth and holiness in the world, and to build up the kingdom of Christ with souls redeemed from the guilt of sin, and disenthralled from the bondage of corruption, we imitate the greatest and the best of the human race. We enter the sacred enclosure where patriarchs, prophets, and apostles have been our predecessors; and where the most illustrious individuals that future ages shall produce, will be our successors. Low and grovelling indeed must be the heart that feels no ambition to join this honourable band. Still there is a brighter glory resting on this cause than can be reflected from the harp of the prophet, or the crown of the monarch; than the patriarch or the apostle can possibly impart. It is the work of the Lord. He came from heaven "to seek and to save that which was lost." Once his lips declared, and always his conduct, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." This was the work on which his heart was set when it beat in the babe of Bethlehem, and when it bled on the thrust of the spear; when he flew from the throne and ascended to the cross. Whether he endured the noise and fatigue of the city, or sought the retirement of the village; whether he wept or prayed; whether he agonised in Gethsemane, or expired on Calvary; one object stood present to his mind, one concern occupied his heart, one work employed his hand. Here, disciple of Emmanuel, here behold thy model, and thy motive in the work of the Lord; and here behold thy honour too. How does it

stimulate the faithful servant to see his master labouring by his side; and what servant is he who can devote himself to personal ease, or guilty idleness, while his lord is toiling in the field? It is our honour, and it ought to prove our excitement, that when engaged in the work of enlightening the world, we are, in a humble sense, the satellites of the Sun of Righteousness, forming, in part, the train of his glory, and acting, in measure, as the instruments of his beneficence.

2. It is work which the Lord has commanded. Besides the pursuit of our own personal salvation, we are enjoined, by the authority of our divine Master, to seek the advancement of his cause by every means that prudence can suggest, or diligence apply. This is included in the great precept, "To love our neighbour as ourselves." This is enjoined by the most solemn of all methods of injunction in the form of prayer; and it is somewhat remarkable that the first petition of what is denominated the Lord's Prayer, relates to this duty: "Thy kingdom come." The apostle informs us that this was the very purpose of our being brought to a participation in the benefits of redemption. "Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." And in the spirit of this passage he has commanded us, in another place, "Not to look every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." From hence it is evident that he who does nothing for the cause of Christ at large, however sincerely or however ardently he may be engaged in the pursuit of his own salvation, performs but half the service which he owes to his heavenly Master. The church was never designed by its Founder to be a spi-

ritual monastery, where its members, secluded from the world, should dwell amidst the hopes and privileges of the Gospel, in selfish and indolent repose. It is, on the contrary, represented as "a city, whose gates are open continually," and within which all is activity, and union, and commerce. I have yet to be informed in what version of the New Testament that Christian can have learnt his duty, who imagines he owes nothing to Christ in respect of those places which are yet destitute of the light of truth.

3. It is denominated the work of the Lord, because he will be glorified in its results. One of the most sublime and interesting views we can take of the work of redemption, is to conceive of it, as preparing a crown of eternal glory for the head of Emmanuel. When, therefore, we propagate his Gospel in the world, and are successful in converting sinners from the error of their ways, we collect his tribute, and gather his reward. We are the honoured instruments of multiplying the jewels which are to compose his regalia, and the gems which are to sparkle for ever in his diadem of beauty. Can we be insensible to the force and pathos of this motive? Have we no desire, or can we be satisfied with a faint one, to extend his fame, to multiply the hearts that shall love him, and the tongues that shall speak his praise; can we indeed know the loveliness of him who is altogether lovely; can we love him as we ought, and yet feel no concern that others should know and love him too? Our success is his honour; his honour should be our reward.

4. It is the work of the Lord, because he only can give success to our exertions. "It is not by might or by power, but by his Spirit," that the conversion of

sinners can in any case be effected. The vivid recollection of this important truth is peculiarly necessary in the present age, when amidst the number, the magnitude, the adaptation, the combination of instruments, we are so much in danger of losing sight of the almighty Agent. Institutions have arisen for the propagation of the truth as it is in Jesus, which, while they astonish us by their grandeur, excite the most lively expectations as to their results. Let us beware of being seduced by their imposing appearance from that unlimited dependence upon divine grace for success, which is as necessary amidst the greatest plenitude of means as in the greatest scarcity. The work is the Lord's: this it is no less our encouragement than our duty to remember. This is the consideration which levels the mountains and fills the valleys, with which our fears and our sloth would arrest our career. This is the consideration with which our zeal should answer every objection, smile at every difficulty, and rejoice like a strong man to run a race. Every society formed to disseminate divine truth should be regarded as a fresh call to earnest prayer, and felt as a new excitement to lively hope. Every motive, every obligation, every hope is concentrated in this one expression, "The work of the Lord."

I shall, secondly, consider the manner in which this duty should be performed. "Be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

It is not improbable that the two former expressions relate to our own personal religion; and contain an exhortation to immoveable stedfastness in the hope of the Gospel. This is a duty very frequently enjoined in the Word of God. Then, said our divine Redeemer, "are ye my disciples indeed, if ye continue in my word."

The meteors that wander through the upper regions of the atmosphere, and to which vulgar language has appropriated the name of falling stars, have their resemblances in the firmament of the Christian church; there also are falling stars; or to elevate the metaphor, there is the comet, transient as it is brilliant; but "the path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." No profession that wants continuance, with whatever splendid qualities for awhile it may be characterised, will issue in eternal life. The sight of an aged disciple, who through a long and varied life has triumphed over all the assaults of earth and hell, is indeed a most gratifying spectacle. Than his hoary hairs, a brighter crown of honour is not worn beneath the skies. His sun, before the eyes of admiring Christians, sets with mild and beauteous radiance upon the hemisphere of grace, while angels flock to the brightness of its rising upon the hemisphere of glory.

We shall now consider these expressions in application to the work of the Lord; and I shall observe that our zeal should be characterised:

1. By abundance. "Be always abounding." It may be very justly said of many sciolists that they half know everything, and of some Christians, that they half do everything. This is in direct opposition to the Scripture, which requires us to do everything in the service of God with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Our fruit should not only be excellent in quality, but plenteous in quantity. We are commanded to abound in hope; to be filled with all the fruits of righteousness; to be zealous of good works; and in the text to abound, "to abound always in the work of the Lord."

This expression implies, that our exertions should be

proportioned to our ability. The parable of the talents is exceedingly instructive; and this amongst many other ideas seems to be its leading truth, that we are to be a blessing just in proportion as we are blessed. "Unto whom much is given, from them much is required." Proportion is the great rule of man's accountability. The sin of the unprofitable servant did not consist in his having but one talent, but in his neglecting that one; and the commendation of the others rested not simply on the ground of their improvement, but on that of proportionate improvement. This is a sentiment deserving the attention of the affluent. If they expect the plaudits of the great Judge, they must not only be liberal, but liberal in proportion to their means. Five talents gained by ten will scarcely lift us above the rank of unprofitable servants. I am apprehensive that the operation of this sentiment is yet but very feeble in the Christian world. It is forgotten by many that liberality is a comparative term, which derives its meaning not simply from what we give, but giving in ample proportion to our circumstances. That would be munificence in one man which would be parsimony in another. Never was there an instance of greater liberality than that which our Saviour witnessed and commended in the poor widow, who, though she cast but two mites into the treasury, gave all she had to give. "And he called his disciples, and saith unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living.'" Two inferences may be deduced from this interesting passage. First, that the offerings of the poor to the cause of

Christ are exceedingly welcome in his sight. It is encouraging for those who have only pence or farthings, like this poor widow, to bestow, to be assured that even these, if contributed without grudging, shall neither be unnoticed nor unrewarded by the Lord of heaven and earth. Let the poor come forward and claim their station in the hosts of the Lord, and their share in the triumphs of his cause. The honour of doing something for the glory of God and the best interests of man, is brought down to the level of their circumstances, and is freely offered to their acceptance. If every poor person in the United Kingdoms were to give a penny a week to the cause of Christ, the poor alone could support all the Bible and Missionary Societies in existence twice over. A second inference to be deduced from the narrative of the widow's liberality is, that the rich, to be accepted in their gifts, must give not only of their abundance, but according to it.

If we would always abound in this work, we must eagerly embrace every favourable opportunity for performing it. The advice given by a pagan philosopher to his followers, should be regarded by the disciples of a much higher Master, "Be mindful of opportunities." If we approximate at all to the spirit of the text, we shall, at least so far as our ability extends, hail with delight every fresh object that presents itself to the eye and solicits the hand of Christian mercy.

We must also seek out for opportunities of doing good. We must imitate the conduct of our great Master. Did he, in his merciful circuit of Judea, remain in one city, and refuse to proceed, till he had received an importunate deputation from the next? Did he always wait till misery was prostrate at his feet?

and, to go still higher, did he refuse to undertake the cause of man's redemption, till the combined entreaties of the human race entered into his ears? No. He came to seek that which was lost. "He ever went about doing good." He followed misery into its dark and deep retreats. The objects of religious benevolence resemble the situation of men under the power of apoplexy or insanity, who are unconscious of their malady, and dependent for relief on the unsolicited bounty of spectators.

We must esteem it our privilege, and not our hardship, to do the work of the Lord. When the greatest mass of earthly treasure that was ever collected perhaps in one place since the creation of the world, spread with incalculable profusion before the eyes of David and the design of its being brought together occurred to his thoughts, his soul bounded like a roe upon his mountains. And what was the nature of his joy? Was it avarice exulting at the sight of such boundless affluence? Was it vanity fluttering with delight over the shining heaps with which it was to glitter in the eyes of envious multitudes? Was it ambition rejoicing in its giant sinews for universal conquest? No. Read his own language, as explanatory of his own feelings. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? All things come of thee, and of thine own

have we given thee, for we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days upon earth are as a shadow. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name, cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own." Here is the feeling which should pervade our breasts. Instead of thinking it hard to be so frequently called upon to contribute towards building the spiritual house, we should feel it, as David did when (according to the received text) he devoted hundreds of millions sterling to the material temple, one of the greatest privileges we can possibly enjoy. We should account it our chief delight, whatever we possess, to employ it for the glory of God, and adore with gratitude the condescension which deigns to accept the labour of our hands. What must angels think of our love and gratitude to Christ, when they witness the sullen reluctance with which we sometimes contribute a little of our time, our property, or our ease, to the work of the Lord. "Here, Lord, am I," must they be ready to exclaim, "send me. I court the honour which they consider a hardship. Entrust to my hands the commission of which theirs are so unworthy." Shall we petition heaven by our lukewarmness, or our covetousness, to remove from us the hardship of being the almoners of its bounty? Shall we sue for relief against the work of the Lord as a heavy incumbrance? The servants of the throne will be glad enough to receive it. Let us rather court its continuance by increasing ardour. Let us always abound in the work of the Lord.

2. Perseverance should also characterise our exertion. We must be stedfast and immoveable. These expressions seem to imply some opposition which will try our

constancy, and call for our resistance, and against which I feel it necessary to fortify you.

Your constancy will be tried by a misapprehension of your motives and designs. A Christian in the present world may be compared to a monarch passing among the blind, who, whatever might be the splendour of his dress, or the dignity of his mien, perceive not the majesty which is immediately before them. The principles and the privileges of real religion are thus unknown to the unenlightened part of mankind. And of these principles scarcely one is more difficult of comprehension to such persons than holy zeal. Hence it is little matter of surprise that our most vigorous exertions should be traced up to any other motives than those from which they flow. We are not, however, to abandon our plans of usefulness, or even to remodel them, at the dictates of that ignorance which cannot comprehend them. Raphael would not have altered the master pieces of his pencil to please a blind critic; nor Handel his Messiah at the suggestion of one who was ignorant of music.

Sometimes our stedfastness will be tried by ingratitude. The world has not always known its best friends, nor should the world's best friends, on this account, become its enemies. It is more than probable that the Christian will often be hated and persecuted by the very objects of his mercy. In our attempts to do good, many things must be assumed concerning the persons we would benefit, which will offend their pride, and be likely therefore to provoke their hostility. The misery of unconverted sinners is, however, too great to allow our pity to be repulsed by an ungrateful reception. The surgeon will not abandon his patient, because the painful

process which he finds it necessary to pursue provokes at first the anger of the sufferer.

Let us not be disheartened by derision. There are not wanting men, who, in defiance of every dictate of reason, revelation, and humanity, treat with profane ridicule the fervour of religious zeal. Fanaticism and enthusiasm are the lightest epithets with which they load the character of the man, who, by the glorious gospel of the blessed God would attempt to rescue his fellow-creatures from the fetters of guilt, and the bondage of corruption. It is a shocking, but not an uncommon spectacle, to see men so awfully depraved as to make themselves merry with bantering the efforts of missionary ardour. It is easy to conceive how much sport such persons would have found in Pilate's hall, in communion with his brutal soldiery, when the Redeemer of the world, clad in mockery of his office, was the object of their laughter. Whenever, my friends, you are brought to decide which shall influence your conduct, the miseries of mankind or the derision of a few sceptics, I trust there will be no hesitation as to the course you will adopt.

Let us only take care that our zeal be scriptural in its objects, pure in its motives, and prudent in its measures; and we may pursue our exertions disregarding alike the censures of the ignorant and the sneers of the profane; as the eagle in her flight towards the sun triumphs over every current, and pierces through every cloud that would obstruct her progress, and pursues her towering course amidst the beams of day.

Want of success will sometimes try your perseverance. Discouragement often creeps over the frame from this source with a cold and deadly influence, which it is

exceedingly difficult to resist. In such cases it will be well to remember that our success may be greater than it appears to be, and that it is a cause in which the smallest measure, though less than we could desire, is more than equivalent to all the labour of obtaining it. This, however, will be considered presently more at large.

There is a still more dangerous enemy than all these, by which our constancy will be tried, and that is a spirit of lukewarmness. The rock which the fury of a thousand storms could not shake may waste away in time from some principle of decomposition concealed within itself; and the Christian, whom neither difficulty could appal, nor derision disturb, has, when the lethargy of lukewarmness has seized his energies, drawn around him the curtains of indolence, and sunk to repose amidst the groans of creation. Lukewarmness is the greatest enemy that the cause of the Redeemer has had to contend with of all the foes that ever resisted its progress. Other enemies only attack the hosts of the Lord; this enfeebles and betrays them. Comparatively speaking, lukewarmness is pardonable anywhere else but in the work of the Lord. Connected as it is on one hand with the glory of Jehovah, and on the other with the eternal interests of mankind, it is a crime of awful magnitude. "Cursed," said the inspired prophet, "be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully," or as the word more literally signifies, "that doeth it negligently." Beloved brethren, let us beware of all these causes that may arise to try our constancy, or to cool our zeal in the service of the Lord. This is not a work to be negligently performed, or to be lightly abandoned.

I shall, thirdly, explain the motive by which it is enforced: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

1. This may intend, first, that it shall not be unrewarded. If, indeed, we were not permitted to look beyond the present world for our reward, we should find it here. In the sweet consciousness of having done anything for the glory of the Redeemer, the cause of truth, and the deathless interests of man, there is a degree of felicity more solid and sublime than could be derived from all the wealth which avarice ever hoarded, or extravagance ever lavished. The spirit of Christian zeal is a source of unfailing happiness to itself. The very tears of its pity are pleasant as the drops of a summer's day, and its smiles delightful as the face of nature, when brightened by the sun that succeeds to the shower. But this is not all. There is a rich reward, which after ripening through the years of time, we shall gather in the paradise above, and enjoy through the ages of eternity. Not that we can claim any thing at the hand of our Lord. Not that there is any merit in our most ardent exertions; after we have done all, we must confess that we are unprofitable servants, and that we have done infinitely less than our whole duty. But there is a reward of righteousness, as well as a salvation from sin, that is all of grace: a reward which may consistently be urged upon the disciples of Christ as a motive to benevolence, without denying that all we receive from God is by way of gift. "The Lord Jesus is not unrighteous to forget our labour of love." Not an action of the life, not a word of the tongue, not a desire of the heart, not a farthing of property, not a moment of time, not a labour of the feet, devoted to his cause, shall be

lost in oblivion. "Even the cup of cold water, given in his name, shall in no wise lose its reward." All will be mentioned by him at the last day: all acknowledged and commended before the assembled universe, in that awful season, when one approving smile shed upon the spirit from his countenance will be of more worth than the plaudits of a world. "Be not deceived: what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." What, beyond the commendation of his great Master, the diligent servant shall receive, we are neither able nor anxious to know. We are not acquainted with all those honours and felicities which are concealed behind the veil of what is mortal and material. No one can fully explain to us the words of the prophet, "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament of heaven." One thing we may calculate upon, that we shall behold in heaven the happy spirits whom we may be the instruments of conducting to its joys. If to rescue a fellow creature from the jaws of death, and to restore him to the comforts of social life; if to witness the transports with which he looks, first upon his friends, and then upon his deliverer, be the purest, strongest bliss that earth affords, conceive what it must be to witness the raptures of an immortal spirit, plucked from everlasting ruin, and, through our instrumentality, put in possession of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This will be like adding heaven to heaven, and multiplying the joys of paradise again and again.

"Your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

2. Which may intend also that it shall not be unsuccessful. Were nothing to result from our labour to others, much would be derived to ourselves. But all the

benefit of our efforts will not be confined to our own interests. We do not pretend to say that there will not be partial failures; local and temporary discouragements. This would be to deny the testimony of experience, and to limit the Holy One of Israel. Some minds and some places, after the most laborious and skilful cultivation, exhibit the melancholy appearance of lands abandoned to incorrigible sterility.

The language of the text implies natural tendency. Such labour as I now enjoin, distributing the Holy Scriptures and religious tracts; sending well qualified missionaries to the heathen, and preaching the Gospel in dark benighted corners of our own land; instructing the ignorant and adult poor, has a natural tendency, or, in other words, a peculiar adaptation, under the blessing of God, to effect the conversion of unregenerate sinners. These are the means appointed by Jehovah for carrying into effect his benevolent intentions concerning this guilty world; upon which, when judiciously, ardently, and perseveringly applied, we may as rationally expect the blessing of heaven, as the husbandman does upon the toils of the field. If sublimity of design; if exhaustless sufficiency, and the wisest adaptation of means to the end; if the testimony of experience; if assured conformity to the purposes of the Eternal Mind, be any encouragement to hope for success, then has the Christian philanthropist, of all other persons, the least ground to fear "that he shall labour in vain, or spend his strength for nought. For thus saith the Lord, As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven; and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be

that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I send it."

Ultimate and generally efficiency is promised in this expression. The work of the Lord, with whatever local or temporary failures it may be attended, shall triumph eventually over every obstacle. The truth of God has declared it, and has given the promise into the hand of Omnipotence to be performed. How many centuries shall roll ere the Sun of Righteousness will pour forth the noontide glory of the millennial day, we have no means to conjecture; it is sufficient for us to know that such a period will arrive, and that our humble exertions are in the line of events which accelerate its approach, and contribute to its triumphs. If the limits of this sermon would permit, or the state of your minds required it, I could direct a whole current of prophetic language over your zeal, which, like the breath of heaven, would fan the spark into a flame. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The decree has passed the lips of Jehovah, "That Christ shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;" and however slowly he may appear to enter upon his yet desolate heritage, the time must arrive when he shall reign over a spiritual kingdom, knowing no limits but the circumference of the globe. Amidst all the changes of this mortal state, the work of the Lord must tend to its ultimate perfection. The spiritual temple must proceed, and we have had the evidence of twenty memorable years, that it depends not for its success upon the political aspect of the times. What was eloquently said of the Church of Rome, may with much greater propriety

be affirmed of this sacred edifice: "It has remained for ages a splendid and immutable fabric, which time could not crumble, nor persecution shake, nor revolutions change; which has stood amongst us like some stupendous and majestic Apennine, that, whilst the earth was rocking at its feet, and the heavens were roaring round its head, balanced itself upon the base of its eternity, the solemn memorial of what was, the sublime prediction of what must be." Brethren, upon the scaffolding that surrounds that edifice you are employed. If other men labour in the fire, you will not. Yours is not the discouragement of the painter, the poet, or the architect, who, after they have finished their most elaborate productions, may reflect with a sigh that they have only prepared a costly sacrifice to be offered, in its turn, upon the altar of time. Yours is not the mortification of the philosopher, who, after spending his life to build up a theory, may close his existence with a fear lest, while his monument is yet fresh, the hand of a successor should demolish at a stroke the labour of his life. None of these fears need distress your mind or paralyse your zeal. Whatever work you do for the Lord shall stand for ever. Here, and here only, is certainty and durability. The end of all things is at hand, the solemn catastrophe of nature and of art; and then, when the mightiest productions of genius, which now so captivate and astonish, shall be but as a garland to deck the funeral pile of expiring nature, the work which we now do for the Lord shall be seen, untouched by the flames, the only remaining monument of successful labour upon earth, the only achievement which shall be crowned with the glory of immortal fame in heaven.

I am reminded that it is time for me to look towards

the conclusion, which must not, however, arrive till I have given to the text that emphasis which the existing events of the present times so remarkably supply. We live, my friends, in no common era. The church of Christ has arisen from her long repose, and, as if refreshed by the slumbers of ages, and concentrating the neglected energies of centuries, is entering upon labours which will never cease till she shall stand between the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The river of life, clear as crystal which flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, long impeded in its course by the lukewarmness of former generations, has at length happily forced its barrier, and is flowing through innumerable channels, prepared by the zeal of all denominations of Christians, to receive its vivifying streams, and to convey them in different directions to the parched places of the earth. Missionary establishments have opened a spacious bed for the heavenly waters, on the banks of which Hindoos and Hottentots, Chinese and Otaheitians, are at this moment washing away their sins, quenching their thirst after happiness, and inhaling the bliss of eternal salvation. The British and Foreign Bible Society, more like the ocean than a river, is rolling the tide of life to every shore beneath the skies. Another division of the sacred stream is flowing back, though alas but slowly, to its original source, and conveying salvation to the children of Israel. The Religious Tract Society pours forth a mighty stream; while the Sunday School system supplies its rivulets, where children of every age may sip the waters of salvation. Survey, my friends, the grand and interesting scene, and ask, if through your neglect these numerous and important channels shall have their sup-

plies cut off? Shall our lukewarmness renew those impediments, the demolition of which has been celebrated by songs on earth, and songs in heaven? Lukewarmness never had so little to excuse, so much to aggravate its guilt as now. The curse of Meroz must light upon that man who, in the present age, denies his help to the work of the Lord.

But I ought not, surely, to forget the object for which you are now assembled, and while enumerating the various opportunities which are presented for gratifying your zeal, omit the Association which you have this day formed for diffusing, through your own county, a greater plenitude of gospel truth. The sole object of this union is to promote the glory of God, and the best interests of man. You are animated by higher motives than those which derive their energy from sectarian distinctions. There are spots in every county which, in respect to religious culture, are barren and desolate indeed. In some places the population has become enormously disproportionate to the provision made by the establishment for religious instruction; in others, the parish church is beyond the reach of a large part of the inhabitants; and in some, we are obliged to believe, however the expression of our convictions may give offence, that the glad tidings of the gospel are not published in all their fulness and importance from the pulpit of the minister, nor its purifying tendency exhibited in his life. In such cases as these it is at once our duty to God, our country, and our fellow-creatures, to step in and supply the lack of service. The establishment of county associations has been followed, in many parts of the kingdom, with a degree of success which should stimulate your exertions, and encourage your hopes.

Congregations have been collected from those parts of the community which spent their sabbaths in profanity and mischief; churches of holy and peaceable Christians have been formed of those who were once, at least some of them, the pests of society; places of worship have been erected, and whole neighbourhoods reformed. Nor are these the only advantages resulting from such institutions. As in all other cases of moral charity there will be a reaction of benefit. By creating a new object of no ordinary interest; by leading to a more frequent intercourse between the different ministers and churches of the county; and at the same time exciting amongst them a spirit of holy emulation in this labour of love, the affairs of our congregations will be kept from sinking into a dull and stagnant state, the fire of zeal will be cherished, and the cords of brotherly love will be drawn still closer round our hearts. One of the purposes, no doubt, for which all the male part of the Jewish people was to appear together, three times a year, before the Lord, was to preserve unimpaired the bond of fraternity, so much in danger of being relaxed without occasional communion; and such an end, in no small degree, will be accomplished by a diligent attendance upon the half yearly or annual meetings of these County Associations.

It must be obvious to every one, that for such an object as this, funds are indispensable, and that they must be raised by the associated churches. Every congregation in the county, and every individual of the congregation, will feel the obligation to exert themselves according to their ability, in support of a cause exclusively their own. It would surely be a criminal inconsistency, while such exertions are made to send the gospel to distant lands, to neglect those places which

are destitute of it in our own immediate vicinity. Like rays diverging from a centre, and pressing to the remotest circumference through all the nearer and intermediate spaces, our zeal emanating from our own personal religion should reach the heathen world through our relatives, friends, and neighbours that lie between.

For these, and all similar exertions, it becomes us to recollect that "the time is short." Earth is the scene, and human life the limit, of these honourable efforts. You are flying over the field of labour upon the wings of time, and can only drop a few seeds of immortality as you pass rapidly along. Your opportunity for doing good must end with your life, and may end long before. Unlooked for misfortunes may reduce you to poverty; incurable disorders may render you helpless; and in such circumstances the recollection of neglected opportunities will be no pleasant companion to your afflicted heart. But should your means of usefulness be continued to the end of life, and life itself be protracted far into the years of decrepitude and infirmity, even then how short is the period allotted to zeal and benevolence for doing the work of the Lord. Shall we cut off even from this short space one half by neglect, and by lukewarmness misemploy the other half? The honour and felicity derived so largely from this service, are all confined, so far as our information extends, to the present world, and give one advantage to saints on earth above those who have entered upon their heavenly rest. Angels, it is true, are represented as performing mysterious offices of love for the Christian during his pilgrimage below; "as ministering spirits they minister to the heirs of salvation;" but even this is not done till he is become an heir of salvation, which is ordinarily

effected through the instrumentality of man. We read of no mission composed of the spirits of just men made perfect sent from the skies, and charged with the gospel to a benighted part of the globe. Let us then be diligent. Opportunity is the flower of time, which we hold this moment in our hand, fresh, fragrant, and blooming, but which to-morrow may drop and wither upon our grave. "Work therefore while it is called to-day, the night cometh when no man can work; and whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

Permit me, my brethren and fathers in the Christian ministry, with all affection and respect, to enforce the language of the text upon your most serious attention. It speaks to us with its full emphasis. We are bound to do the work of the Lord, not merely by the common ties of Christian duty, but by all the weighty obligations which the most solemn office beneath the skies has imposed upon our consciences. Among the various duties which we are to enjoin upon the people, religious zeal unquestionably occupies a conspicuous place. But exhortations to this duty, unless enforced by our conduct, will come to the hearts of our hearers, chilling as the breeze which issues from the north, and has swept the surface of the frozen ocean. It becomes us to recollect that we are accountable for the very spirit of our congregations; since, in this respect, a minister who, in addition to competent talents and prudence, is beloved by his people, can cause the tone of their character to strike in unison with his own. While, for knowledge, we should be in the midst of the house of God, like the ever burning lamps in the holy place of the temple,

our zeal should resemble the heavenly fire, which sent forth a quenchless flame upon the brazen altar.

Let us, then, be patterns of Christian activity. Let us manifest a forwardness in giving countenance and support, so far as our ability extends, to every plan that has for its object the best interests of man and the glory of God. And while contending for the faith once delivered to the saints; while assiduously cherishing in our flocks the spirit of personal devotion; while labouring to the utmost in the cause of evangelical morality, let us not forget, both by our sermons and our conduct, to admonish our churches to new efforts, in the language of the text: "Beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

THE ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AT SURREY CHAPEL,

ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1819.

The impression produced by the delivery of this sermon first attracted public attention to the author. It was criticised freely, but reached a third edition; and of all his printed sermons, it remains the one most generally known.

John xii, 32, 33.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me: this he said signifying what death he should die.

If the perfection of wisdom consists in seeking the noblest ends by the fittest means, then does the cause of missions appear before the world, invested with the glory, and preferring the claims, of the wisest scheme for man's activity which has ever been devised. Of the benevolence and sublimity of our object, there can exist no doubt; and the only question which can arise about the rationality of our scheme, must relate to the adequacy of our means. We are not unfrequently told that all attempts to convert pagan nations to Christianity, not supported by the aid of miracles, must prove entirely ineffectual, or be followed with very inconsiderable success. That miracles were necessary at the introduction of Christianity, as the witnesses of its heavenly origin and descent, is obvious; they formed the visible signatures of the divine hand to the testimony of the Son of God and his apostles; but to argue for their repetition through succeeding ages, in every country which the gospel approaches for the first time, is to contend that a deed, however well attested, cannot be admitted as valid unless the witnesses who originally signed it live for ever

to verify their signature. This objection, however, is best answered by an appeal to facts. However difficult it may be to ascertain with precision the exact time when the testimony of miracles ceased, nothing is more certain than that these witnesses had finished their evidence long before the conversion of the northern and western parts of Europe; and the demand of supernatural interposition, as necessary to the propagation of Christianity, is urged with an ill grace by a Protestant, when it is remembered that there is not a single Protestant country which did not receive the gospel unaccompanied with signs and wonders; and with still greater inconsistency is it made by an Englishman, when it is considered that this happy country, the glory of Christendom, the joy of the whole earth, and the evangelist of the world, was recovered from the thraldom of Saxon idolatry without one miraculous operation.

What, then, are the means with which we set out on this high and holy enterprise of converting the world? I answer, the doctrine of the cross: for, saith Christ, "If I be lifted up," or "when I am lifted up, I will draw all men unto me."

In these words our Lord announces the nature of his approaching death: he was about to be lifted up, or crucified; he predicts the consequences with which his crucifixion would be followed; all men would be gathered to him; he specifies the means, and the manner of their conversion: they would be drawn, or attracted by an exhibition of his death. In other words, the text presents us with the great object of missionary zeal, the grand instrument of missionary exertion, and the final consummation of missionary success. It will be instantly perceived that I have not sought after novelty of

subject, and it will soon be discovered that I have not attained ingenuity or profundity of discussion. The state of my mind and feelings since I received the application of the directors, would alone have precluded these. Their request for my services on this occasion found me at the tomb of all that was dearest to me on earth, a situation not very favourable for penetrating into the depth of any other subject than my own irreparable loss. One thing which induced me to comply with their solicitation, was a hope that my mind would be drawn away in some degree from the heart-withering recollection of departed bliss: nor has that hope been altogether disappointed; for the subject of my sermon has often presented such visions of spiritual glory as have made the tear forget to fall, and hushed the sorrows of a bursting heart, and taught the preacher that while the missionary cause goes as the messenger of mercy to pagan realms abroad, it is one of the best comforters in the house of mourning at home.

I. The text presents us with the great object of missionary zeal: "To bring men to Christ."

There are at the present moment more than six hundred millions of the human race in the appalling situation of the men whom the apostle describes as "without Christ in the world;" and the question is, with what feelings and what purposes a Christian should survey this vast and wretched portion of the family of man. To ascertain this, you have only to contemplate the scene which at your last anniversary was brought before you with such force of reason, pathos, and eloquence. Behold St. Paul at Athens. Think of the matchless splendour which blazed upon his view, as he rolled his eye round the enchanting panorama which encircled the

hill of Mars. Around him, as he stood upon the summit of the rock, beneath the canopy of heaven, was spread a glorious prospect of mountains, islands, sea, and sky. Within view was the gulf of Salamis, and on the horizon the plain of Marathon, where the conquests of the old Greek heroes had saved not their country only, but the mental liberty and energy of man. Above him towered the Acropolis, crowned with the pride of Grecian architecture. There, in the zenith of their splendour and the perfection of their beauty, stood those peerless temples, the very fragments of which are viewed by modern travellers with an idolatry almost equal to that which reared them. Stretched along the plain below him, and reclining her head on the slope of the neighbouring hills, was Athens, mother of the arts and the sciences, with her noble offspring sporting by her side. The Porch, the Lyceum, and the Grove, with the statues of their departed sages, and the forms of their living disciples, were all presented to the apostle's eye. Who of us possessing the slightest pretensions to knowledge or taste, can even fancy himself gazing upon this sublime and captivating scenery without a momentary rapture? Yet there did this accomplished scholar stand as insensible to all the grandeur, as if nothing was before him but the treeless, turfless desert. Absorbed in the holy abstraction of his mind, he saw no charms, felt no fascinations, but on the contrary was pierced with the most poignant distress: and what was the cause? Because "he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." To him it presented nothing but a magnificent mausoleum, decorated, it is true, with the richest productions of the sculptor and the architect, but still where the souls of men lay dead in trespasses

and sins; while the dim light of philosophy that still glimmered in the schools, appeared but as the lamp of the sepulchre, shedding its pale and sickly ray around gorgeous chambers of death. What must have been his indignant grief at the dishonour done by idolatry to God, what his amazement at the weakness and folly of the human mind, what his abhorrence of human impiety, and what his compassion for human wretchedness,* when such stately monuments had not the smallest possible effect in turning away his view from the guilt which raised them and the misery endured amidst them. Yet how many professedly Christian travellers and divines, whilst occupying the same spot, though they saw not a thousandth part of what the apostle saw, have had their minds so engrossed by the scene, as not to feel one sentiment of pity for the Pagans of old, or the Mahometans who now dwell amidst the venerable ruins. But we being of one mind with St. Paul, and looking upon the souls of mankind in the light which his inspired writings have thrown upon their destiny, have imbibed his temper, and feel our spirits grieved within us, over the multitudes that are given to idolatry. We cannot help thinking that men without Christ are in the very depths of misery, though they may stand in other respects upon the summit of civilisation, literature, and science; and for such an opinion we can plead the authority of the apostle, who, as we have seen, bewailed a city of philosophers with more intense and piercing grief than any of us ever did a horde of idolatrous savages.

Here, then, is the object of our zeal, to bring to Christ those who are afar off. "To turn men from

* See Mr. Wardlaw's admirable sermon on this subject, preached before the Missionary Society in Surrey Chapel, May 13, 1818.

dumb idols to serve the living and the true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven." To induce them, by the power of persuasion, in humble dependence upon the blessing of God, to renounce all their systems of error for the revelation of Christ as our divine Prophet; to abandon their rites, sacrifices, and penances, for his one oblation as our great High Priest; and to forsake their vicious customs and immoral habits, for obedience to his laws as King in Zion. In fact, to accomplish in the happy experience of the heathen, the descriptions which the pen of prophecy has given of the Messiah and his kingdom; to achieve the victory announced in the mystic terms of the first promise, and bruise the head of the serpent; to circulate the blessing of Abraham's seed through all the families of the earth; to bring the gatherings of the peoples unto Shiloh, as the way, the truth, and the life; to cause that bright star to rise upon the benighted parts of the world, the beam of which so confounded the eye of the hireling prophet, that his tongue forgot to curse the host; to scatter the fruits of Isaiah's rod, and diffuse the fragrance of Jeremiah's branch, over all the famishing and fainting children of the fall; to open new channels through which the cleansing streams of Zechariah's fountain, and the vivifying waters of Ezekiel's river, may flow; to prepare for the coming of Haggai's desire of all nations, and to bring forth the people sitting in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death, to feel the enlivening beams of the moral sun, the dawn of which Malachi foresaw, and to catch the healing virtues which he shakes from the golden plumage of his wings.

Now, such an object associates our cause, first, with the design of the Son of God in redemption. The object

of the Redeemer's visit to our world was not to teach men the arts and the sciences, not to instruct them in letters, not to introduce the reign of philosophy, not to break the yoke of civil tyranny, nor to promulgate the best theory of human government; valuable as are these objects to the present interests of mankind, they are infinitely too low to be the end of the incarnation and death of the Son of God. For such purposes he would not have deigned to approach the horizon of our globe. No, my brethren, the one object of the humiliation of the Son of God was the salvation of the human soul; and what must be the value of the salvation which was worthy of that humiliation? When Jesus Christ rose from the throne of his glory, it was to avert the curse which threatened to sink a guilty world to perdition, to roll back the torrent of damnation, and pour through its deserted channels the streams of salvation; to rescue innumerable millions of immortal spirits from the consequences of the fall, and lift them by the power of his grace from the borders of the flaming pit to the heavens of the great God. This was the favourite object on which his mind reposed from eternity, which he seemed in haste to disclose, as soon as the apostacy of man presented an opportunity; which he loved to announce to the world by the messages of the prophets, and to exhibit in shadow, by the sacrifices of the priests, for four thousand years before its accomplishment. In seeking to save the souls of the heathen by bringing them to Christ, we raise ourselves into the dignity of a partnership with the Son of God in these his mighty designs; we enter into the fellowship of that cross which is destined to occupy eternity with the development of its wonders, and to fill the universe with the brightness of its glory.

Secondly. Such an object associates our cause with the ultimate end of all Providential arrangements. Providence is the direction of all human events with immediate reference to the kingdom of Christ. The government of the world (imperium in omni imperio) has ever had for its object the accomplishment of the mediatorial scheme. From the fall, Providence devoted itself to redemption, and directed all its energies and resources to prepare for the crucifixion. Separate from this, it has no interests to establish in all its sphere of operation. Hence the language of our Lord: "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;" and hence the echo of the same truth in the writings of his apostle: "He hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to his church." All human events, the revolutions of empires, the change of dynasties, the succession of monarchies, the results of war, the councils of cabinets, the debates of senates, the progress of discovery, the course of invention, in their immediate influence and remote effects, are all parts of that great plan which has for its object to bring men to Christ. This is the centre where all these lines converge. The world is given to Jesus, and he is incessantly employed in bringing it to himself. The Babylonish, the Persian, the Macedonian, the Roman conqueror, each at his own proper period, and in his own proper place, entered upon the stage, and though "he did not think so, neither did his heart mean it," ministered to the designs of God in redemption. Little did Julius Cæsar imagine, when the white cliffs of Britain, glittering in the sun, excited his ambition and drew him across the Channel, for what purpose he dis-

embarked his legions on our coast; but we know that it was to open a door through which the Gospel might enter our beloved country. Little did the spirit of commercial enterprise imagine, when urged only by the auri sacra fames, it fixed its establishments near the mouth of the Hoogley, or on the banks of the Ganges, that it was sent thither as the forerunner of Christian missionaries. Little does the genius of war imagine, when impelling its mad votaries to new contests, that Christianity is following at a distance, in the rear of its victorious armies, to plant her stations on the fields of their encampment, to bear away the best of the spoils, and assume the dominion which other potentates have lost. Little did Columbus imagine, when with his heart big with his mighty projects, he walked in silence on the shores of Andalusia, and watched the star of evening go down the western sky, who it was that dictated the purpose to explore the region which she went nightly to visit on the other side of the Atlantic. We live at a time when all these events are clearly seen to connect themselves with the grand purpose of Jehovah, "to bring all men to Christ." And the people of future generations will as clearly discern the same relation in the circumstances of our day. Behold, then, the position occupied by the friends of missions. We are following in the rear of Providence, pursuing the very line of its march, moving when and where it moves, like the children of Israel in obedience to the cloudy pillar, availing ourselves of all the advantages it throws in our way, and embracing in our plans every favourable occurrence which we perceive in the universal history of the globe.

Thirdly. Such an object associates our cause with

the best interests of the human race. If by the blessing of God upon our labours, we succeed in drawing men away from their idolatry to Christ, we save their immortal souls from death, and provide them with a blissful and glorious eternity. There are not wanting those who would restrict our benevolence to the temporal interests of mankind. Civilise the savage, say they, cultivate his intellect, teach him to till the ground, and deliver him from the galling fetters of slavery, but leave alone his religion. Yes, such an admonition is in character with the man who, having himself no part in Christ, would gladly find himself countenanced in the dreadful deficiency by the universal suffrages of a world of atheists or idolators. Such a scantling philanthropy, if that indeed may be called philanthropy which proposes to leave men without God, and Christ, and hope, may satisfy the abject creeping spirit of infidelity, which, beyond the visible heavens, sees nothing to expect or fear, but it will not do for the lofty benevolence of Christianity, which soars upon the wing of faith till she beholds the unseen world, adapts the plan of her operation to the scale of eternity, and pursues it with an energy inspired by a view of heaven on the one hand, and of hell on the other.

Suppose, that out of compliment to the mockers of missionary zeal, we relinquished its highest, and indeed its identifying object, and confined our efforts exclusively to civilization, sending the plough and the loom instead of the cross, and that upon this reduced scale of operation we were as successful as could be desired, till we had raised the man of the woods into the man of the city, and elevated the savage into the sage, what, I ask, should we effect, viewing man, as with the New

Testament in our hands we must view him, in the whole range of his existence? We may pour the light of science on his path, and strew it with the flowers of literature, but if we leave him to the dominion of his vices, it is still the path to perdition. We may teach him to fare sumptuously every day; but alas, this, in his case, is only like offering viands to the wretch who is on his way to the place of execution. We may strip off his sheep-skin kaross, and clothe him with purple and fine linen, but it is only to aid him, like Dives, to move in state to the torments of the damned. We may raise the sculptured monument over his bones, in place of the earthly hillock in the wilderness, but though his ashes repose in grandeur, the worm that never dies will for ever devour his soul, amidst the flames that can never be extinguished. In civilization, we confer a boon which is valuable while it lasts; but it is a boon which the soul drops as she steps across the confines of the unseen world, and then passes on to wander through eternity, "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But let us aim first to save the soul, by bringing it under the influence of Christianity, and then as we advance to the end of our exertions we shall not fail to scatter along the path of our benevolence all the seeds of civilization and social order.

It is a mere assumption destitute of all proof, that such tribes as those of South Africa, and the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, could be civilized without the aid of religion: but it is not an assumption, for experience proves the fact, that in their savage state they are capable of receiving the gospel. And who needs to be informed that the principles of true religion contain

the germ of all that is polished, as well as all that is excellent, in human nature. Religion is strictly and essentially a civilising process. By faith, the mind is raised above the debasing tyranny of sensible objects, and sensual gratifications; by hope, the influence of present and pressing impulse is controlled by the prospect of future benefits; love establishes a law of kindness in the breast, by which the irascible passions are subdued, and thus the elements of barbarism are expelled whenever the soul is brought into union with Christ; industry is enjoined by the weight of a heavenly authority, and enforced by motives of eternal importance, while the intellect sublimated and quickened by its communion with immaterial objects, is prepared to start in the career of endless improvement.

If, then, you would convert the wilderness into a garden, let the first tree you plant in it be the tree of life, and you shall not long see it skirted by the nettle and the briar, much less like the poison tree of Java, shall it stand the centre of a circle of death, but you shall behold it dropping its fruit for the life of the world, and shedding its leaves for the healing of the nations, while civilisation shall, with feeble and tender arms, clasp its trunk, and be raised by its support into notice and strength.

II. Let us now consider the grand instrument of Missionary exertions. This is the doctrine of the Cross: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw men unto me."

It was evidently our Lord's intention to represent the conversion of the nations not merely as a circumstance that would follow his death in the mere order of

time, but as a consequence connected with it in the order of cause and effect.

This day do we see something resembling the splendid fable told of Constantine's conversion. Ye hosts of our British Israel, marshalled around this pulpit, and confederated in the mighty enterprise of wresting the empire of the world from the prince of darkness, behold the cross suspended in the firmament of revelation, radiant with its own brightness, and inscribed with the auspicious motto, "By this conquer." Yes, this is the emblem which must wave alone in our banner, "and to it shall the Gentiles seek." I preach another and a true crusade to the heathen world; far different from that convulsive mania which, in the midnight of superstition, disturbed the slumbers of the globe, and like a volcano, precipitated all Europe in a state of fusion upon the valleys of Judea. Our object is not to recover the holy sepulchre from the possession of heretics, but to make known the death of Him that deseended to it to wrest the keys of empire from the king of terrors: the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, as the sword, the spear, and the battle axe; but spiritual, as the doctrines of the gospel exhibited in the sermons of our missionaries; the line of our march will not be marked by ensanguined fields, and the reign of desolation, but by the comforts of civilization and the blessings of Christianity. We shall not be followed in our career by the groans of dying warriors, and the shrieks of bereaved widows, but by the songs of redeemed sinners, and the shouts of enraptured angels; our laurels will be stained with no blood but that of the Lamb of God, and bedropped with no tears but those of penitence and joy;

our spoils will consist not of bits of the true cross, or shreds of the Virgin's robe, but rejected idols and the regenerated souls of those who once adored them.

It will be important under this head of discourse, first, To state what is essentially included in the doctrine of the cross. It includes, of necessity, the manner of Christ's death. The sacred historian having conducted us to Calvary, and pointed to its summit, exclaims with pregnant simplicity—"and there they crucified him." Crucifixion was not only the most agonizing, but the most ignominious death. By the Jewish law it was pronounced accursed, and by the jurisprudence of Rome it was employed as the besom of destruction, by which the vilest of slaves and criminals might be swept from the face of the earth, "as the filth and offscouring of all things." Hence Cicero, in his impassioned oration against Verres, reserves it as the very sting of his accusation against the Prætor, that he had dared to crucify a Roman citizen, and on this ground invokes the Conscript fathers to appease the insulted majesty of the commonwealth by punishing the guilty author of her disgrace. And didst Thou, who art the brightness of thy Father's glory, humble thyself to the death of the cross? Yes, thou didst, but by that cross thou shalt conquer the world.

The design of Christ's death, as an atonement for sin, is essentially included in this doctrine. It appears to me to be one of the mysteries in the world of mind, that the doctrine of the atonement should be disputed by any who profess assent to the testimony of revelation. Have they ever read with attention the language of St. Paul? "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness

for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." How is it possible to avoid seeing the great truth for which we are now contending in this most convincing passage, where, in the compass of two verses, it is thrice affirmed that the end of Christ's death was a declaration of justice? For in what other way than as an atonement his blood can be a manifestation of justice, it must confound even the ingenious spirit of error to inform us. The atonement is not so much a doctrine of Scripture, as the very Scripture itself, and if it be removed, leaves all that remains as incoherent and unmeaning as the leaves which the Sybil dispersed to the wind.

The divinity of Christ's person, as constituting the value of his satisfaction, appears to me to be an essential part of this system of truth. While the hope of a guilty world can rest nowhere else than on an atonement, that in its turn, can be supported by nothing short of the Rock of Ages: and hence it is that these two are so often exhibited in the Word of God in close connexion with each other. It was he "who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, that humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It was he "who was before all things, and by whom all things consist, that made peace through the blood of the cross." It was he "who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, and that upholdeth all things by the word of his power, that by himself purged our sins." It should not be overlooked, how closely connected with the divinity of Christ, and

how dependent upon it, is the success of the cause of missions. This cause with all which it involves, is supported by the power of Jesus. "The pleasure of the Lord is in his hand." "The government is upon his shoulders." "The Father hath made him to be head over all things to his church." "All power in heaven and earth is given to him." Do we, then, depend for success upon the energies of a mere creature? Is it an arm of flesh alone that we must look to for support and conquest? Then, indeed, may we sound the signal of retreat to our Missionaries, dissolve our Society, and abandon to Satan the field of conflict. But we have not so learned Christ; we believe him to be the omnipotent and the omniscient God. In him we trust, and shall not be ashamed.

Essential to the doctrine of the cross is the gratuitous manner in which its blessings are bestowed. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." "It is of faith that it might be by grace." Leave out the justification of the soul by faith alone, and you send to the heathen but a lying resemblance of the cross.

And to complete the scriptural view of this sublime compendium of truth, it is necessary we should include its moral tendency and design as respects the heart and conduct of those by whom it is received. "I am crucified," said the Apostle, "with Christ," earnestly desiring, "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings; being made conformable unto his death."

It is not one of these, but all of them combined, which form the doctrine of the cross. Take either of

them away and the arch is destroyed, all the rest sink together to the dust, a mass of splendid ruins, a heap of crumbling fragments. Without the atonement, the fact of the crucifixion appears to me, a dark unintelligible inexplicable spot upon the page of revelation, connecting nothing, supporting nothing, explaining nothing: the atonement without the deity of Christ, wants both the impress and the value to secure for it confidence; and acceptance of the atonement and the deity of Christ, without the justification of the soul by faith, leaves the system without any link which can connect it with the experience of the sinner; while all together would be of no avail in his salvation, unless they secured his sanctification.

2. I shall now illustrate the various powers of attraction which the doctrine of the cross exerts. The stupendous fact arrests and fixes the attention. The human mind, especially in its ruder states, where there is such a preponderance of imagination over reason, is much more easily and powerfully wrought upon by a narration of facts than a statement of principles; and the whole fabric of Christianity, both as to doctrines and duties, is founded upon a fact; and that fact, drawn out into details more touching and tender than can be found in any history or in any romance. The life and the death of the "man of sorrows," to all the sobriety and power of truth, unite the fascination of fiction. The veiled splendour of his deity, occasionally bursting through its thin disguise, and irradiating the gloom of his poverty; the extremity of his sufferings, and the heart-affecting meekness with which he bore them; the perfection of his virtues, together with the unrelenting cruelty of his enemies; the

mysterious combination of glory and meanness in his person and life; the garden of Gethsemane; the scenes of Pilate's hall, and the mount of Calvary, give a magic power to the story of the cross; but when we thus know that this was the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son of God for a world of sinners, we arrive at the acme of all that is marvellous, and interesting, and sublime. History in its most extraordinary narrations, and imagination in its loftiest flights, are both left infinitely behind. When with devout contemplation we have been engaged in surveying this stupendous fact, we feel, in turning away to other objects, just as the man does who has been gazing upon the unclouded sun, so dazzled with excess of light, as to perceive no other object, whatever its magnitude or splendour. We no longer wonder at the researches of the prophets, nor feel any surprise that the angels should quit every fountain of celestial knowledge to look upon the cross.

Conceive then, my hearers, the effect of this wonder of wonders upon the minds of the poor pagans, who, after having been conversant all their lives with nothing but the despicable puerilities of a barbarous state, hear for the first time of the death of the Son of God. "'Tis this," said our Missionary, Ebner, speaking of the wild Bushmen, "'tis this that excites their admiration, melts them into tears, and breaks their hearts." If then, you would arrest the savage of the desert; if you would detain him from the chase; if you would rivet him to the spot, and hold him in the power of a spell that is altogether new to him, do not begin with cold abstractions of moral duties or theological truths; but tell him of Christ crucified, and you shall see his once vacant countenance enlivened by the feelings of a new and deep

interest, and the tear-drop glistening in the eye unused to weep; and shall witness the evil spirit departing out of the man, as he drops one by one from his hand, the murderous weapons with which he lately would have sought your life.

As an exhibition of unparalleled love, it melts and captivates the heart. The cross has been beautifully denominated the noon-tide of everlasting love, the meridian splendour of eternal mercy. The sacred writers never seem to labour so much for expression as when setting forth this mystery. "Herein," said one, "is love;" as if, till God gave his Son, men had never seen anything that deserved the name of love. John calls it the manifestation of love, as if nothing more now remained to be known of love in any age or any world; while St. Paul speaks of it as the commendation of love, as if nothing more could now ever be said upon the subject. Jesus Christ, in describing this act of divine mercy, uses this remarkable emphasis, "God so loved the world:" importing that this is a demonstration of love which will send rapturous surprise to the remotest world that Omnipotence has formed. In short, all we can say of this here is, that it is ineffable; all we know of it, that it passeth knowledge. Now, my brethren, there is a mighty power in love. He that knows all the mechanism of the human mind, has told us, that "the cords of love are the bands of a man." That heart, which wraps itself up in the covering of a stubborn and reckless despair against the attacks of severity, like the flower which closes its petals at the approach of the angry blast, will put forth all the better parts of its nature to the smiles of love, like the tendrils of the sea anemone, when it feels the first wave of the returning tide upon

its native rock. Think then of the attraction of the cross, when the love which it exhibits is seen and felt by a mind under the influence of the Spirit of God. What was it, my hearers, that melted your hard and frozen hearts into penitence, and gratitude, and love? What was it that drew you away from your sins? What was it that brought you as willing captives to the feet of Jesus? It was the love of God beseeching you upon the summit of Calvary, and with open arms bidding you welcome to the heart of Deity. Everything else united to repel you; the terrors of justice petrified you with horror, and despair was binding you more closely than ever to your sins, till divine mercy appeared and told you there was hope for the guilty. And shall not the same attraction be felt, do you think, in pagan realms? Shall this heavenly magnet lose its power there? O no; many circumstances unite to increase its influence amongst those miserable tribes. Does it heighten the love of God to consider the meanness of its objects? What then must be the views of it which the poor Hottentots will entertain, whom their Dutch oppressors have taught to consider themselves as little above the level of the baboons and monkeys of the woods! and which the wretched Chandalahs of the East will entertain, who are considered unworthy to look upon the face of a Brahmin, when they are informed that God so loved them, as to give his Son to die upon the cross for them? Does the guilt of its objects heighten the love of God, and render it more and more astonishing, how will it appear to the South Sea Islander, who so lately rioted in the brute violence of the passions, gorged his cannibal appetite with the flesh of the man he had murdered, and offered human blood in sacrifice to demons, when he is

informed that God so loved him as to give his Son to die upon the cross for him? And then there is another circumstance which must add to the attraction of the cross in heathen countries. One of the prevailing features of all idolatry is cruelty; and for this plain reason: When man lost the knowledge of God, he cast his deities in the mould of his own imagination, and animated them with the dispositions of his own heart. The prototypes of all the idols in the Pantheon were found in the human bosom; and because mercy had no altar in the latter, she therefore had no statue in the former. Go, Christian missionary, to the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty, and to those who have never associated any other idea with Deity than inexorable cruelty, and never contemplated their gods but with uncontrollable terror, proclaim that God is love; and by all the soft allurements of heavenly grace, draw them away from the hideous frowning objects of their homage, to the Father of Mercies.

As a system of mediation, it allays the fears of a guilty conscience, and draws the soul into confidence in God. History informs us that the greater part of the religion of all idolatrous nations, both ancient and modern, has consisted of rites of deprecation and expiation—a plain proof, in my opinion, that no nation ever considered penitence and obedience to be sufficient to satisfy the demands of an offended deity. So far as the testimony of history and experience goes, the idea of retributive justice, as an attribute of the Divine Being, seems far more easily deducible by a sinner, from the light of nature, than that of mercy. What, I ask, is the meaning of all those bloody sacrifices, and rites, and penances, which have been multiplied without number

in the ritual of idolatry? They are the efforts of a guilty but blinded conscience, groping, in the hour of its extremity, after some atonement on which to roll the burden of its sins, and seeking some satisfaction to the justice it has offended, by which its fears may be allayed, and on the ground of which it may have confidence in respect of the past. No sooner does a missionary set his foot on any part of the heathen world, than innumerable objects seem to ask him, with deep and lengthened emphasis, "How shall man be just with God?" Here, then, is the attraction of the cross: it removes every obstacle out of the way of the sinner's approach to God; it puts an authorised and perfect satisfaction to justice in his hand, with which he may venture to the very foot of the eternal throne, and gives him that boldness which arises from a perception that God has not more effectually provided for the sinner's salvation, than he has for the glory of his own attributes, government, and laws: in short, that he is both "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

By admitting an individual appropriation of its benefits, it appeals to all the feelings of self-regard and personal interest. It is the glory of the Gospel, that, while it makes an ample provision for the world, and invites the whole family of man to the feast, it lays all its blessings at the feet of every individual to whom it comes, and tells him that they are all for him, if he will accept them. It does not appraise the value of the human race by a method of calculation founded only on the mass of mankind, but represents every individual as an object of infinite importance, and of distinct and separate consideration in the view of Infinite Mercy. Think of the effect of this upon the mind of an obscure

pagan, who, amidst the millions around him and above him, has no idea of his own individual importance; who, by a long series of cruel oppressions, has begun to lose all self-respect; who, under the debasing influence of tyranny, has reconciled himself to the thought of having no separate destiny or accountability, and of being a mere appendage to the establishment of some lordly master. I say, conceive the effect of the gospel upon this man's mind, when led forth by a missionary to Mount Calvary, and told that, if he believe the truth, the Son of God died upon the cross for him, for no child of Adam rather than for him, as much for him as if he stood alone in need of a Saviour, and that all the blessings of salvation shall centre and settle in him. Do you think there is no attraction here? Yes, and could you follow this man home to his hut, you would see him pondering the mystery in the pensive attitude of thought, or repeating it to himself in all the garrulity of ignorance, or collecting around him his domestic circle, and telling it to them in the first raptures of surprise.

By the suitableness and certainty of its blessings, it awakens hope, and establishes faith. From the cross, as the tree of life, hang in maturity and abundance, all those fruits of grace which are necessary to the salvation of the soul. Are we guilty, here is pardon. Are we rebels against God, here is reconciliation. Are we condemned, here is justification. Are we unholy, here is sanctification. Are we agitated with conscious guilt, here is peace for a wounded spirit. Here every curious enquiry which the mind might originate concerning God, and the soul, and death, and eternity, and moral obligation, and personal accountability, is answered satisfactorily, and set at rest for ever. With what feelings

must an intelligent heathen approach his final catastrophe. He has seen his ancestors go down to the dust, and often, when standing upon their graves, has felt a distressing solicitude, which nothing could relieve, to know something of that state of being into which they passed when they vanished from the earth. At length his own turn has arrived, and he too must die. Whither is he going? What is to become of him? If there be a God, how shall he meet him? If there be a future state, how and where is he to spend it? Not a whisper of consolation is heard from the tomb, nor a ray of satisfactory light is thrown upon its darkness by the instructions of the living. Oh! with what horror does he turn his half averted eye upon that sepulchre, in which he must shortly be interred; and with what dreadful efforts does he endeavour to force his reluctant spirit upon her destiny, starting every moment at the spectres which rise in her own perturbed imagination. Oh! how much would he give for some one to tell him what there is beyond the grave, and what he must do to get rid of his guilt, so as to be admitted to the world of the blessed. Just at this time, one of our missionaries reaches his abode, and declares to him that Christ, by his death, has brought life and immortality to light. This is bliss indeed; he never heard such news before. The Spirit of God gives effect to the word. He is drawn to Jesus, clasping to his bosom that doctrine which gives him life in death, and hope in despair. And he who but a few weeks before was stumbling upon the dark mountains of idolatry, just ready to be precipitated into eternal night, quits the scene of his earthly existence with the language of Simeon upon his lips, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy sal-

vation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles." Such, then, are the sources of that attraction which is destined in the divine councils to draw all men away from their idolatry to God. Not that this effect will ever be produced independently of the influence of the Spirit, or merely in the way of moral suasion. Nothing short of a supernatural agency accompanying the truth will render it in any case "the power of God unto salvation." It is, however, a tribute due to the wisdom of God, to observe the moral fitness of the instrument by which he accomplishes the purposes of his mercy. As auxiliary to the power illustrated above, I ought to mention the mode ordained by the Divine Head of the church for publishing his gospel. Preaching is a very important part of those means which Christ has instituted for the conversion of the world. It is, in fact, the necessary introduction of all other means, and that from which all the rest draw much of their energy. What stress is laid upon this in the Word of God. How emphatically does the apostle dwell upon the preaching of the cross. It is the doctrine so made known that becomes the power of God unto salvation. For one person that is converted by reading the gospel, it might be safely affirmed there are a hundred converted by the preaching of it: a circumstance which, in considering the relative merits of Bible and Missionary Societies, throws an immense weight of importance into the scale of the latter. Giving to Bible Societies all that is claimed for them, and too much in reason cannot be claimed; still, without Missionary institutions, they would present a very incomplete system for the conversion of the world. The preaching of the cross has peculiar force in foreign

countries, where, in addition to all the attractions usually found in oral instruction and impassioned address, the hearers see and feel the influence of the benevolence which has led the preacher to quit his home, to traverse the ocean, and dwell in a strange land, for the benefit of others.

Thirdly. I shall now consider the effects which the doctrine of the cross has produced. Contemplate the mighty wonders which were wrought by the cross during the apostolic age. It is a fact that the personal ministry of our Lord was attended by comparatively little success. While exhibiting an example in which the uncreated glories of the Godhead mingled their splendour with the milder beauties of the perfect man, while working miracles brighter than the sun, and preaching morality purer than the light, but few were attracted to his cause. We do not read that a single soul was converted by the sublime discourse upon the Mount. But no sooner was he crucified, and his death had become the theme of apostolic preaching, than Christianity assumed a new aspect. The scene of its first triumphs was Jerusalem. Those simple words of Peter addressed to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain," wounded three thousand to the heart, and drew them, with weeping and supplication, to look on him whom they had pierced. For a long season, as often as the cross was exhibited, multitudes of the seed of Israel became the trophies of its power. We might have expected it to be successful anywhere rather than there. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had many circumstances in their case which opposed it with the strongest resist-

ance. They had seen all that was repulsive and forbidding in its exterior aspect. They had beheld the Crucified One in the very lowest stage of his humiliation; they had seen him covered with shame and spitting, the object of derision, the butt of ridicule, lifted up in the place of public execution, associated with malefactors in his death, and expiring in a way that, according to their own law, rendered him accursed. In addition to this, they had all the consciousness of having put him to death; which, even if they could admit that he was the Messiah, seemed to throw them to the greatest possible distance from his mercy. They heard the apostles charging them with his murder, and knew the truth and justice of the accusation. Moreover, if they became this man's disciples, it was necessary they should abandon their fond and long cherished hopes of a temporal prince and worldly domination. Yet even there, and over all these prejudices and obstacles, did the doctrine of the cross so remarkably triumph, as to fill Jerusalem with its followers; and vast multitudes, who had remained unallured by the splendour of his living miracles, were captivated and subdued by the spectacle of his dying agonies. Where, I ask, in the language of triumphant exultation, may we not expect it to prove successful, when it subdued the guilt, the fear, the pride, and the bigotry of those very men by whom the crucifixion itself was effected? We have heard much of the bigotry of the heathen, especially of that bigotry as fortified in the East by the adamantine bond of caste. But what is the power of caste, when set in opposition to the rod of Jehovah's strength? No matter what is the deity which is at the head of the fellowship; no matter what the distinctions of the privileged order, or what the re-

proaches to which their voluntary forfeiture exposes them, let the Brahmin only look by faith to the crucified Saviour, and that moment the altar and the god sink together to the dust, his soul swells beyond the measure of her chains, which burst from around her like the green withs of the Philistines from the arms of Sampson, and the regenerated spirit walks abroad, amidst the whole family of God, greeting them in the language of the apostle, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

When the Apostles and Evangelists were driven by the storms of persecution from Judea, they turned to the Gentiles, "preaching Christ in every place." One of the earliest scenes of their labour, after they had passed the confines of the holy land, was Antioch, a city, which, with the beautiful grove of Daphne in its neighbourhood, was so utterly abandoned to licentiousness as to be shunned by every heathen who had any regard to his reputation, and to give rise to the phrase, "Daphnici mores," which expressed the utmost corruption of manners. Thither came the disciples "that were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, and some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus." In that scene of effeminacy, debauchery, and voluptuous sin, was the truth so remarkably successful as to originate a new name for the followers of Jesus, and the "disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." Tell me in what country, however abandoned to depravity, we may despair of the triumphs of the cross, when it expelled the votaries of Bacchus and Venus from the grove of Daphne, raised a magnificent church upon the

site of the temple of Apollo, converted this elysium of vice into the walk of Christian meditation, and taught even the inhabitants of Antioch, to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world."

Corinth was another of the cities into which Christianity made an early and victorious entrance. This was a place of great renown in its day. Such were its commerce, its science, its temples, and its schools, that the prince of Roman orators denominated it totius Græciæ lumen (the light of all Greece), and another writer called it the ornament of Greece. Its elegance, however, was exceeded by its vice. Lasciviousness was carried to such a pitch in this most abandoned city, that in the language of those times the appellation of a Corinthian given to a woman imported that she had lost her virtue, and "corinthiazein," or to behave as a Corinthian, spoken of a man, was the same as to say, that he was given up to uncleanness. To this scene of iniquity did the apostle direct his course, like the sunbeam to the stagnant lake, not to partake of its impurity, but to draw from it a pure and beneficial exhalation. And how did he attempt the reformation of this dissolute people? Did he begin by descanting upon the deformities of vice, and reading lectures in praise of virtue? Nothing of the sort. He himself shall inform us. In writing to his converts he tells them, "And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." And at Corinth was the attraction of this truth so irresistible, as to raise one of the most considerable of the primitive

churches there, to which no small portion of the New Testament was addressed.

These, however, are but instances selected from a general course of exertion and success. Wherever the apostles went, the doctrine of the cross was the theme of their public discourses, and the topic of their more private instruction. Whether standing amidst the luxury of Corinth, the schools of Athens, the overwhelming grandeur of Rome, or the hallowed scenes of Jerusalem, they presented this to all men alike. They did not conceal the ignominy of the accursed tree behind the sublime morality of the gospel, and permit the unsightly object to steal out only disguised, and by degrees, but exhibited it naked, and at once, as the very foundation of the religion which they were commissioned and inspired to promulgate. When the Jew on one hand was demanding a sign, and the Greek on the other was asking for wisdom, they replied to both, "we preach Christ crucified." They never courted the philosopher by a parade of science, the orator by a blaze of eloquence, or the curious by the aid of novelty. They tried no experiments, made no digressions. Feeling the power of this sublime truth in their own souls; enamoured by the thousand thousand charms with which they saw it attended; emboldened by the victories which followed its career; and acting in obedience to the divine authority, which regulated all their conduct; they kindled into rapture amidst the scorn and rage of an ungodly world, and in the fervour of their zeal, threw off an impassioned sentiment, which has been returned in distinct echo from every Christian land, and been adopted as the watch-word of an evangelical ministry, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of

our Lord Jesus Christ." Wonderful was the effect of their labour. A revolution more extraordinary than history records, or imagination could have conceived, was every where effected, and this by what the men who gave laws to the opinions of the world, derided as "the foolishness of preaching." The powers of paganism beheld the worshippers of the gods drawn away from their shrines by an influence which they could neither understand nor resist. Not the authority of the Olympian Jove, nor the seductive rites of the Paphian goddess, could any longer retain the homage of their former votaries. The exquisite beauty of their temples and their statues, with all those fascinations which their mythology was calculated to exert upon a people of refined taste and vicious habits, became the objects not only of indifference, but abhorrence; and millions by whom the cross must have been contemplated with mental revulsion as a matter of taste, embraced it with ecstacy as the means of salvation. The idolatrous rites were deserted, the altars overturned, the deities left to sympathise with each other in dumb consternation, the lying oracles were hushed, the deceptive light of philosophy was extinguished, Satan fell like lightning from heaven, while the ministers of light rose with the number, the order, and the brilliancy of the stars. Resistance promoted the cause it intended to oppose, and persecution like the wind of heaven blowing upon a conflagration, served to spread the flame. In vain "did the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord." The imperial eagle collecting all her strength, and rousing all her fury, attacked the Lamb of God, till she, too, subdued and captivated by the cross, cowered beneath

its emblem, as it floated from the towers of the capitol, and Christianity, with the purple waving from her shoulders, and the diadem sparkling upon her brows, was proclaimed to be the Truth of God and the empress of the world, on that throne of the Cæsars before which she had been so often arraigned as a criminal, and condemned as an impostor.

What an illustrious proof is there in all this of the divine authority of the New Testament. The men that set out on the project of converting the world from idolatry and irreligion, with no instrument but a cross, and no patronage but His who was crucified upon it, must either have been mad or inspired, and the result proves which was the fact.

Since the apostles fell asleep, and others have entered upon their unfinished labours, has not this continued to be the means by which nations have been subjugated to the sway of religion? I appeal to the records of ecclesiastical history. What was it, I ask, which, by the instrumentality of Luther and Melancthon, and Calvin, and Zuingle, dissolved the power of the Beast on the continent of Europe, and drew a third part of his worshippers within the pale of a more scriptural communion? It was the doctrine of justification by faith in the blood of Christ.

David Brainerd, the apostle of the American Indians, has left an essay to inform the world that it was by preaching Christ crucified that he was enabled to raise a Christian church in the desolate wilds where he laboured, and among a barbarous people devoted to witchcraft, drunkenness, and idolatry.*

* "I cannot but take notice," he remarks, "that I have, in the general, ever since my first coming among these Indians in New

The Moravian Missionaries, those holy, patient, unostentatious servants of our Lord, have employed with peculiar effect these heaven-appointed means, in converting and civilising the once pilfering and murderous Esquimaux. With these, have they also "dared the

Jersey, been favoured with that assistance, which to me is uncommon in preaching Christ crucified, and making him the centre and mark to which all my discourses among them were directed. God was pleased to help me 'not to know anything among them save Jesus Christ and him crucified.' And this was the preaching God made use of for the awakening of sinners, and the propagation of this work of grace among the Indians; and it was remarkable, from time to time, that when I was favoured with any special freedom in discoursing of the ability and willingness of Christ to save sinners, and the need they stood in of such a Saviour, there was then the greatest appearance of divine power in awakening numbers of secure souls. And it is worthy of remark, that numbers of these people are brought to a strict compliance with the rules of morality and sobriety, and to a conscientious performance of the external duties of Christianity, by the internal power and influence of divine truths, the peculiar doctrines of grace, upon their minds. And God was pleased to give these divine truths such a powerful influence upon the minds of these people, that their lives were quickly reformed, without my insisting upon the precepts of morality and spending time in repeated harangues upon external duties. When these truths were felt at heart, there was now no vice unreformed, no external duties neglected. Drunkenness, the darling vice, was broken off from, and scarce an instance known of it amongst my hearers for months together. The practice of husbands and wives in putting away each other, and taking others in their stead, was quickly reformed, so that there are three or four couples who have voluntarily dismissed those they had taken, and now live together again in love and peace. The same might be said of all other vicious practices. The reformation was general, and all springing from the internal influence of divine truth upon their hearts, and not from any external restraints, or because they had heard their vices particularly enforced, and repeatedly spoken against. Some of them I never so much as mentioned, particularly that of the parting of men and their wives, till some having their conscience awakened by God's word, came and of their own accord confessed themselves guilty in that respect."—See Brainerd's Journal, Edwards's Works, vol. iii., p. 416.

terrors of an Arctic sky, and directing their adventurous course through the floating fields and frost-reared precipices that guard the secrets of the Pole," have caused the banner of the cross to wave over the throne of everlasting winter, and warmed, with the love of Christ, the bosom of the shivering Greenlander.

Mr. Kicherer, when he first laboured amongst the Hottentots, proceeded upon the plan recommended by some modern sciolists. He tried to civilise their habits, as a preparatory process for communicating to them the principles of religion; but every effort failed, till he was obliged to try that last, which he should have done first, and proved by an additional experiment that the doctrine of the cross is the only certain method of ameliorating the moral condition of the world. And what is it which, at this moment, is kindling the intellect, softening the manners, sanctifying the hearts and purifying the lives of the numerous tribes of the degraded sons of Ham? It is the "faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is this, poured in artless strains from the lips of our missionaries, and sent home to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is more than realising the fable of Amphion's lyre, and raising up the stones of African deserts into the walls of the church of God.

O, had the cannibal inhabitants of Taheite been persuaded to renounce their wretched superstition and cruel customs, by any efforts of a purely rational nature; had the apostles of philosophy been the instruments of their conversion, and had the gods of Pomare been sent home by them, to be deposited in the British Museum, instead of the Missionary Rooms, how would the world have rung with the praises of all-sufficient Reason.

New temples would have been raised to this modern Minerva, while all the tribes of the Illuminati would have been seen moving in triumphal procession to her shrine, chanting as they went the honours of their illustrious goddess. But thine, thou crucified Redeemer! thine is the power, and thine shall be the glory of this conquest. Those islands of the Southern Sea shall be laid at thy feet, as the trophies of thy cross, and shall be added as fresh jewels to thy mediatorial crown.

And indeed, not to quit our own age, or our own land, do we not see all around us the attractions of the cross? What is it that guides and governs the tide of religious popularity, whether it roll in the channels of the Establishment or those of Dissent? Is it not this which causes the mighty influx of the spring tide in one place, and is it not the absence of it which occasions the dull retiring ebb in another? Yes, raise me but a barn, in the very shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral, and give me a man who shall preach Christ crucified with something of the energy which that all inspiring theme is calculated to awaken, and in spite of the meanness of the one, and the magnificence of the other, you shall see the former crowded with the warm and pious hearts of living Christians, while the matins and vespers of the latter, if the gospel be not preached there, shall be chanted only to the cold statues of the mighty dead. To conclude this part of my discourse, where, I ask, and when, was there an idolatrous nation converted to Christianity, or a lukewarm church reclaimed from indifference; when was there minister at home, or missionary abroad, who was successful in bringing sinners unto God through Christ, by any other system than that which I have before described? This has ever been

successful, and with the proofs of its power embodied in the records of its victories, can we, who have adopted it as the instrument of our warfare, doubt for a moment of its ultimate and universal triumph?

III. Let us now anticipate the final consummation of Missionary success. "All men shall be brought to Christ." I do not mean to infer from this expression, or from any other which can be found in the Word of God, that we are ever to look for an age when every inhabitant of the globe shall become a real Christian. But what I contend for is, that the Scripture warrants us to expect an era when, by means of human exertion, and in answer to the prayers of the righteous, the power of Antichrist shall be dissolved, all fundamental errors in Christendom shall be exploded, the blasphemies of infidelity shall be hushed, the Jews shall believe in Jesus, the pale crescent of Mahomet shall set for ever in the blaze of the Sun of Righteousness, the multiform systems of idolatry retire before the growing brightness of eternal truth, and the whole earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, the fruits of righteousness, and the works of peace. So has God decreed. So has prophecy declared. "Men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed." "I saw in the night visions," said the prophet Daniel, "and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and languages, and nations, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away; and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." If on the one hand there is much in the pre-

sent condition of the world to try our faith in these animating predictions, is there not, in the exertions of the Christian world, very much on the other hand to confirm and strengthen it? Contemplate for a few moments the state of the earth, together with the means which are employed for its improvement.

Suppose, for the sake of illustration, that you occupied the station of the angel represented in the Apocalypse, as standing in the sun, and that with eyes piercing as the beams of day, you were looking down on the revolutions of this low diurnal sphere. Scarcely had England turned towards the east, before Ireland, an integral part of your own empire, would present four millions of Roman Catholics, satisfying themselves with the crucifix instead of the cross; at the same time, however, you would behold the preachers of the Irish Evangelical Society, and the Schools of the Hibernian Society, lending their assistance to the Protestant ministers of various denominations, and all infusing the pure principles of the gospel into this mass of superstition. The Atlantic having glided away beneath your view, and with it the United States which fringe its western shore, you would look down on the innumerable tribes which wander without God through the terra incognita of the American continents; still amongst these would be discovered here and there a missionary conducting them to Jesus. Then would follow the broad Pacific, spotted with innumerable islands, each the domain of idol gods; yet Taheite and Eimeo would shine resplendent, like bright specks upon the bosom of the ocean, whence the light of salvation is diverging in every direction over that mighty mass of waters. No sooner

had your eye regaled itself with Christian temples, floating, as it were, upon the great South Sea, than China would heave into sight its unwieldy empire, groaning as it rolled beneath the crimes of two hundred millions of idolaters; but even there, groups of Chinese, assembled to read in secret the Testaments circulated by our honoured Morrison and Milne, would exhibit the first attraction of the cross in that most singular country. Now, the plains of Hindostan, watered by the obscene and deified Ganges, would arrest your attention and produce an indescribable horror, as they disclosed the frantic orgies of Juggernaut, the flaming pile of the devoted widow, with innumerable other spectacles of idolatrous cruelty; yet, in the centre of Oriental abominations, would you discover the crimson standard waving from the Mission-houses of Serampore and Calcutta, with Carey, and Townley, and the men of other missions, directing the teeming population to the means of salvation. If you looked northward beyond the mountains of India, immense tracts, covered with ignorance and idolatry, would be seen stretching away to the pole, but at the same time you would descry the rose of Sharon, planted by Stallybrass and Rahmn, amidst the snows of Siberia, and attracting the Calmuc and the Tartar by its fragrance and beauty. Persia and Arabia would succeed, presenting in the numerous millions devoted to the false prophet, a formidable phalanx of blindness and bigotry; but moving down from Astrachan, along the shores of the Caspian, borne by the missionaries of the Edinburgh Society, would be seen the cross, advancing to spread the spirit of division and revolt through this army of the aliens, and to bring down the tottering

fabric of Mahomedanism to the dust. Palestine, "the ground of sacred story," next appears. How would your eye linger over the valleys where the father of the faithful pitched his tent, the mountains on which Isaiah struck his harp; and above all, on the summit of that hill, where the Saviour of the world poured out his soul unto death. Little, I confess, would be seen at Jerusalem but the mosque and the minaret, save where a company of Jews, veiled with unbelief, sit down round the site of their ancient temple; still would you not there anticipate the accomplishment of those numerous predictions which assure us that the exiles of Judea shall one day dwell in their own cities, and look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn? In Asia Minor, amidst prevailing superstition, you would trace the Russian Bible Society, bearing back the golden candlestick to its place in one hand, and in the other the torch of truth, to rekindle those lamps which once threw their lustre on the waves of the Mediterranean. Africa would then pass by shrouded in the gloom of barbarism, and still bleeding from the wounds inflicted by the ruffian hand of commercial cupidity, an object as wretched as ignorance, oppression, and idolatry can render her; but ah! you would exclaim, with joyful exultation, "I see Bethelsdorp, and Theopolis, and Guadenthal, and Sierra Leone, in each of which I behold a pledge that Africa shall yet be free, enlightened, and holy." Europe, debased by the superstitions of the Greek church in the north, and by the errors of the Vatican in the south, would present that wonder of the age, the British and Foreign Bible Society, rising up to complete the work which Luther's life was too short to finish, and effect a

universal and perfect reformation. Such, then, is the present condition of the moral world, and such, in part, the means employed for its improvement; from which you perceive that the church of Christ, like the woman in the parable, has hidden the mystic leaven in the mighty mass, and that the assimilating process is commenced. It has commenced, and though it operate a while unseen, it shall never cease till the whole lump is leavened.

Evidence is not wanting that the period is rapidly approaching when all the nations of the world shall be brought to Christ. I pretend not to ascertain the year, nor the century, when the millennium shall reach its meridian. I am not in the secret of "the times and the seasons which the Father hath put into his own power." I am not versed in the symbolical arithmetic of prophecy; but it appears extremely probable, from all the movements of Divine Providence, that a great and happy era is struggling in the birth. The political, the moral, the religious world, have all been agitated of late years, by new and quickening principles. The stagnancy of past ages has been disturbed. A vivifying wind has been sweeping over the face of chaos, preparatory to the new creation. The day has broken upon the world, and, just as might be expected, after a night so lowering and cloudy, beams of light diffuse themselves from one side of the heavens, and the storm rumbles with awful grandeur, as it retires across the other.

Nor should it be overlooked that the chief splendour of that illustrious era will consist in the universal subjection of the world to Christ. It appears pretty evident that the grand contest which was originated by the

entrance of moral evil into the universe; which converted the regions of celestial peace into the scenes of destructive war; which was then cherished in hell by the powers of darkness, and has since been perpetuated on earth in all the multiform systems of error and vice, has more particularly concerned the dominion and glory of the Son. He seems to have been the special object of satanic envy and hate, and to prevent his reign, all the resources of the infernal world have been incessantly in motion. Here, then, is the glory of the latter day; it shall exhibit the termination of this grand rebellion, the cessation of this long conflict, in an entire victory over the rebel hosts, and the universal subjection of the world to Jesus. "Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Christ." "He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Hence the shout of victory which is to be uttered at the close of this awful contest, is represented as uttering this language: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of God, and of his Christ." Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Let them anticipate with triumph his universal reign. All men shall be gathered to him. Wherever the traveller directs his course through this wide world of ours, he shall behold in every country, city, town, and village, the friends and the disciples of Jesus, and none else. He shall hear every temple echo with his praise, and see every land filled with his renown. He shall witness all the kings of the earth casting down their crowns, and all the nations laying their glory at his feet. And how greatly will it contribute to his renown, that this mighty conquest was effected by his cross. It will raise the fame of his

power and wisdom to the highest pitch, that by "the foolishness of preaching" he overcame every enemy, and subjugated the world to himself. Had human reason devised a method for overturning the fabric of idolatry, and for establishing the true religion upon its ruins, it would have been anything but that which was employed by God. We should have said, "Adapt your system as nearly as possible to the fashionable philosophy of the day; announce it with Tully's golden periods; and celebrate its glories with the harmony of Virgil's numbers, and then you will probably succeed: especially if its apostles be the princes, the conquerors, and the scholars of the age." "But God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as ours." He determined to conquer by an instrument despised for its weakness, and hated for its ignominy. "The weakness of the rod of Moses magnified the power of which it was the instrument; the contemptible nature of the rams' horns, signalised the victory at Jericho; the despicable appearance of the lamps and pitchers celebrated the discomfiture in the valley of Moreh; and the ignominy of the tree will raise the fame of the power of Jesus in conquering the world, to a pitch beyond which nothing can advance it. To have broken and dissolved the gates of hell in a situation advantageous and honourable, would have magnified his power and wisdom; but to do this upon the cross, the instrument prepared by themselves for his destruction, elevates the glory of the achievement above our comprehension and our praise."

I shall now conclude with an address to the directors, to missionaries, to ministers, and to the congregation.

Directors of this vast and noble institution, see in this subject your honour and your duty. Yours is the distinction of uniting, organising, and directing the zeal of a large proportion of the Christian world; a zeal which has for its object to make known to perishing millions the Saviour of mankind. A sacred trust is reposed in you. May the wisdom that is from above replenish your minds, the love of Christ constrain your souls, the unity of the Spirit pervade your councils, the bond of peace encircle your hearts, and the blessing of God crown all your exertions. Continue to cultivate a friendly intercourse with other kindred societies, remembering that we all attack the same enemy, and move under the same banner; and though one may have inscribed upon the pole of his standard the name of the Church Missionary Society, a second that of the Baptist Mission, a third that of the Wesleyan Missions, yet all have placed the cross in the centre of the banner, and all have written over the sacred emblem the ancient motto, "By this conquer." Your generosity in past times to our Moravian brethren, and more recently to the Edinburgh society, produced but one feeling, and that was admiration; and called forth but one expression, and that was applause. Perish for ever all envy and all rivalry, and let the only contest be this, who shall most glorify God and bless the human race.

Direct your missionaries to exhibit the great propitiation to the heathen, and to consider this as the very end of their mission. At the same time, give them every opportunity of acquiring those qualifications which are so pre-eminently important in their situation. I speak the sentiments of all my brethren in the ministry with

whom I have conversed on the subject, when I respectfully but urgently advise a lengthened term of education for such of our missionaries as are destined to the East. It is our opinion that four years are quite little enough for the literary and theological education of men who are to preach the doctrines of the gospel in a strange language, and to present them pure as they were revealed from heaven, in a faithful translation of the sacred volume. In this country, valuable as are literary attainments, and highly valuable they are everywhere, a minister may discharge the duties of his office with considerable success, although he be ignorant of every language but his own; and even should he unhappily swerve from the truth, there are many on every hand to pluck up the weeds of error as fast as they arise in the garden of the Lord; but what is a missionary to do without a literary education, who cannot hold a conversation with a pagan till he has acquired a foreign tongue; who cannot distribute a tract till he is able to translate it into a language, the genius and structure of which are totally dissimilar to any with which he is acquainted? The work of translating the Scriptures is of immense importance, and of no small difficulty, and should not be entrusted to unskilful hands. One imperfect version of the Bible may pollute the crystal stream of revelation for ages, and one error in theology planted amongst the heathen, may luxuriate amidst almost boundless space. First versions and first systems of doctrine delivered to the converts from idolatry should be as perfect as possible, since these are the models of others which succeed, and in addition to the circumstance of propagating their own imperfections, if any such attach to them,

they soon acquire the veneration which is paid to antiquity, and cover their errors with the defence of this sacred shield. I can assure the directors that any increase of expense incurred, by renewed attention to civilisation in barbarous countries, and by an extended literary education being given to their missionaries going to the East, will be most cheerfully defrayed by increased liberality on the part of their constituents.

There is one circumstance which is as a bunch of myrrh in the festive goblet of these annual banquets of benevolence and zeal: I mean the vacant seats of some who have "fallen asleep in Jesus," and the increasing infirmities of others who yet remain. Aged and honourable men! whose revered forms inspire veneration, whose noble exploits provoke emulation, and whose memory will be held in everlasting esteem; you linger amidst the scenes of labour, weary and worn as you are, yet almost unwilling to retire to your eternal repose, through fear lest, when you are gone, the cause which you have sheltered by your prayers, watered with your tears, and which is dearer to you than your life's blood, should be neglected. Dismiss your fears; around you are your younger brethren, whose character you have formed by your example, and into whose spirit you have breathed your own, confide the sacred trust to them. Bequeath to them as a legacy the interests of the Missionary Society, and whenever the chariot shall arrive, far distant be yet the day, which is to convey you in triumph to the skies, step into it without reluctance, being assured that we will search for your descending mantle, and never give up the pursuit till we have found the inspiring vestment.

Missionaries, ye noble hearted men, whom I feel myself unworthy to address, and whom we all regard, or ought to regard, not as the servants of our institution, but its respected and beloved agents in foreign countries, receive my congratulations upon the high honour to which you are called. Yours it is to follow in the train of the Redeemer's retinue and earth's best friends, next to apostles, evangelists, and martyrs. Learn from the subject of this discourse your exalted and unalterable duty. Your peculiar and almost exclusive business is to "make manifest the savour of the knowledge of Christ in every place." "You are debtors both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, so much as in you is, to be ready to preach the gospel of Christ." You go far hence to the heathen to make known "the unsearchable riches of Christ." However you may sometimes, for relaxation, engage in the studies of natural history or local pursuits, this is your business, to preach the gospel. Seek to have your own minds filled with the glory, and your own hearts attracted by the influence of the cross, till you burn with inextinguishable ardour to plant the holy standard on the loftiest ramparts of superstition. Take as your example the inspired missionary to the Gentiles, and determine in his spirit "to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Repose unbounded confidence in the weapons of your warfare. Seek to be full of faith. Leave your unbelief in England. In England did I say? Oh no: leave it not here, we have too much of it already; carry it with you on board the vessel which is to convey you to your station, then sink it ten thousand fathoms below the surface of the ocean,

and call the monsters of the deep to sing its requiem. "Be ye holy that bear the vessels of the Lord." Be diligent; death has passed on before you; along the line of your march rise the tombs of departed heroes; and Swartz, and Brainerd, and Vanderkemp, and Cran, and Des Granges come forth from their sepulchres as you pass, to admonish you in the language of Scripture, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." "Be faithful unto death." Never forsake your standard. When you are found amongst the slain, let your face be toward the foe, and no scar be seen upon your back; then will we tell the world that,

> "When you fell, you fell like stars,
> Streaming splendour through the sky."

My respected fathers and brethren in the ministry, has this subject no voice to us? Let us learn here our obligations. The pulpit is intended to be a pedestal for the cross, though, alas! even the cross itself, it is to be feared, is sometimes used as a mere pedestal for the preacher's fame. We may roll the thunders of eloquence, we may dart the coruscations of genius, we may scatter the flowers of poetry, we may diffuse the light of science, we may enforce the precepts of morality from the pulpit, but if we do not make Christ the great subject of our preaching, we have forgotten our errand, and shall do no good. Satan trembles at nothing but the cross. At this he does tremble; and if we would destroy his power, and extend that holy and benevolent kingdom, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, it must be by means of the cross.

Upon the congregation, the discourse which they have heard prefers just and extensive claims. Behold the Lamb of God for yourselves, my hearers, with penitence, with prayer, and faith. Could you direct the eyes and hopes of millions to the Saviour, this would avail nothing for your salvation, in the absence of a personal application on your own behalf. Having first given yourselves to the Lord, then use every scriptural means for making him known to the heathen. Be importunate in prayer that his kingdom may come, his "will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Believing prayer is the animating soul of the missionary cause. It is this which distinguishes it from every worldly combination, and elevates it far above the level of mere earthly institutions. Let this cease, and it sinks down from its own exalted rank, to take the place and share the fortune of all other human associations. Any increase of eloquence, funds, or patronage, which the cause of missions might acquire, when the spirit of prayer is departed, is only like the extension which the human body sometimes gains when the vital principle is extinct, or at best but as the tumefaction which precedes dissolution.

Your property, however, must be added to your prayers, since he who has commanded us to ask, has also enjoined us to seek; evidently intending by such an injunction that all rational means should be united with devotion in every case where human agency is employed for God. Christians, I come to ask you this day, not what you will give to send a specific remedy to a nation desolated every year by the ravages of the plague; with such an object I might be bold in appealing

to your benevolence; how much more bold, then, when I ask what you will give, what you ought to give, to send the doctrine of the cross to more than six hundred millions of your fellow sinners, who are without Christ, and therefore without God, and without hope in the world. Answer me this question, not upon the principles of a mere worldly calculation, which looks round upon a circle of luxurious enjoyments with the enquiry what can I spare and not be the poorer; or which values every thing by a pecuniary standard; but as a Christian, who professes to have felt the constraining love of Jesus, and "to have rejoiced in God through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement;" answer me as a Christian, with your eye upon the cross for salvation, what ought you to give out of that property which God has first given you, to send the gospel to the heathen? If any thing can be needed to excite your benevolence, I bring forward this morning five petitions, each soliciting your assistance, and each sufficient of itself to merit the greatest liberality.

The first is uttered in the groans of six hundred millions of human beings, who as they pass before you on their way to eternity, repeat that imploring language, "Come over and help us." The second is from several hundred missionaries, who, looking around upon the immeasurable scene of their labours, urge the admonition of their Master, "The harvest is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth more labourers into his harvest." The third is from the directors, "stating that their expenditure this year has exceeded their receipts above five thousand pounds, and entreating that

they may not be forced to slacken their exertions, for want of funds to support them; which must inevitably be the case, unless they are encouraged to go forward by increased liberality on the part of their constituents." The fourth is from heaven, borne to us by the spirits of departed missionaries, who hover over our assembly this morning, "beseeching us to carry on with renewed vigour that cause in which they sacrificed their lives; and the magnitude and importance of which, amidst all their zeal for its interests, they never perfectly knew till they were surrounded with the scenes of the eternal world." The fifth is, will you believe it? from hell. Yes, directed to your hearts in the shriek of despair, comes the solicitation of many a lost soul in prison: "Oh! send a missionary to my father's house, where I have yet five brethren, that he may testify to them, that they come not into this place of torment." You cannot reply to this, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." What hearts you must possess if you can be deaf to such pleas, and can turn away such petitions unrelieved. Have you arrived at the very limit of your ability, and is every private resource exhausted? Then let us go to the treasury of the sanctuary, let us melt down the church plate, and convert even that into a means of sending the gospel to the heathen, assured that if we have nothing else to give, it will be more acceptable to our divine Lord to see it so employed, than to behold it glittering upon his sacramental board. But do not plead such a necessity till you have surrendered the luxuries of your own houses, till the gorgeous display upon your own tables is given up. The mere tithe of extravagance would support all the

Missionary and Bible Societies in existence, magnified to ten times their present extent. A showy and lavish profusion in our habits is not only injurious to our own spiritual interests, but also to the interests of others. It is a felony upon the fund of mercy. Frugality is the best financier of philanthropy, and one of the most important auxiliaries of the missionary cause.

It is an encouragement to your liberality to know that eventually nothing shall be lost. You are employed in building that temple of which Jehovah declares, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations;" and of which the top stone shall at length be brought forth, amidst the shouts of exulting spectators, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." Stupendous and glorious edifice! its transept shall extend from the northern to the southern pole. Its choir shall rest upon the empire of China, and its western window look out upon the waters of the great South Sea; while all the nations of the earth, attracted by the cross which shines upon its dome, shall assemble within its mighty circumference, and amidst the sacred memorials of missionary institutions, and the monumental inscriptions of illustrious men occupying every niche, and hanging from every pillar, shall celebrate the jubilee of the world, and unite in the sublime anthem, "Hallelujah; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God. The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." While the ten thousand times ten thousand angels round about the throne shall respond to the shouts of the redeemed on earth, "Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb

that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" and still the chorus shall swell, and still the strain shall wax louder and louder, "till every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, shall cry, Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen. Amen."

MINISTERIAL DUTIES STATED AND ENFORCED.

A PASTORAL CHARGE,

DELIVERED TO THE REV. THOMAS JAMES,

AT HIS ORDINATION

OVER THE INDEPENDENT CHURCH ASSEMBLING IN

CITY CHAPEL, LONDON.

The editor regrets that this sermon, which should have preceded the last, as preached before it, has not come in its proper place, as he intended to arrange the sermons in order of time. The like error shall not occur again.

With regard to the sermon itself, the editor cannot refrain from remarking that the author himself lived up to all which he here enjoins, and that he owed all his success as a minister and an author to his observance of the rules which he here lays down. And the editor does not recollect hearing from him any important maxim as to a minister's duty or conduct which he has not met with in this sermon. The author here tells the secrets of his own success, which exceeded that of most ministers. When this charge was given he was a young unknown man, but all his subsequent experience confirmed the opinions which it contained. In the author's peculiar manner, he goes into particulars not often treated on similar occasions, yet not the less important; and these counsels, enforced by his own practice and its results, during more than forty years after they were first uttered, will, the editor trusts, by this re-publication of them, long benefit the denomination which his father so loved and laboured for.

My Dear Brother,

I rise to address you under circumstances at once most interesting and most embarrassing. I have undertaken, at your particular request, an office usually assigned to older ministers than myself. The hoary crown is thought to add weight and emphasis to that part of an ordination service denominated the charge. This glory does not encircle my brows. Compared with many by whom I am surrounded, and at whose feet I should thankfully sit to receive instruction, I am but young in the Christian ministry. What I want in age and experience, however, if a substitute may be admitted, I will endeavour to supply by affection. You are my brother, not merely by the ties of religion and of office; the same mother bore us, the same father was the guide of our youth; whose sainted spirits, perhaps, now bend from their celestial thrones to witness the scene of this morning; and I shall direct no admonition to your heart, my brother, which is not full fraught with the affection of mine. In order to do away every appearance of presumption, I wish to be considered as publicly recognising the vows which, more than ten years ago, I pledged in circumstances similar to those in which you now stand. I wish to feel addressed by my

own charge, thrown back in echo upon my own spirit; and have therefore selected a text which, though I am the speaker, associates me with you in the exhortations it conveys.

2 Cor. vi, 4.

In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God.

The commencement of this chapter should have been rendered in the form of a solemn address to those who were employed in the Christian ministry at Corinth. "Now then, fellow workers, we beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." The four small words, supplied without the least necessity by the translators, serve no other purpose than to alter the sense and mar the beauty of the original. The whole passage is a charge to those whom the apostle in the preceding chapter had represented as entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, and whom he here admonishes not to "receive this distinguished favour in vain; to give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things to approve themselves as the ministers of God."

These words present us with a description,

I. Of the nature of our office. We are "the ministers of God."

This implies, 1. That we are sent by God. The concerns of the Christian church are administered by him "who is over all, God blessed for ever." And of course an affair of so much importance as the appointment of its principal officers, must be his inalienable prerogative. Every one who is truly a minister of God

must be called by him to the work. To prove your commission, you have no need to resort to apostolical succession; you have derived it immediately from God, and no power on earth can add to it the least validity whatever. It cannot be necessary for me on the present occasion to enter particularly into the nature of a scriptural call to the work of the ministry. To express this matter summarily, it appears to me, that an ardent desire to be employed in the work with a view to the glory of God in the salvation of sinners, endowment with all those qualifications which the Word of God requires, together with the election of a church of Christ, are indications of the mind of God, sufficiently obvious to warrant the conclusion that we are called to this honourable but arduous office. If the account you have just read of your views and feelings as a Christian, your motives, desires, and aims as a minister, be a faithful representation of your mind, it may be regarded by you in the light of a copy of letters patent, issued from the chancery of heaven, signed by the Great Head of the church, and authorising you, although it bear no impress of crown or mitre, to preach the gospel to the perishing children of men; and when the pride of ecclesiastical domination would at any time demand by what authority you do these things, you have only to reply, the appointment of him "who giveth pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

2. This expression implies that you are to labour for God. If for God, then not surely for yourself. Self is an idol which has been worshipped by far greater multitudes than any other deity of either ancient or modern heathenism. A minister is the last man in the world who

should be seen at the altar of this abomination, and yet without great care he is likely to be there the first, to linger there the longest, to bow the lowest, and to express his devotion by the costliest sacrifices. This, my brother, and "not the form of creeping things or women weeping for Tammuz," is the abomination which Ezekiel would witness in many a Christian temple; this is "the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy," before which the glory of Jehovah so often, in modern times, retires from between the cherubim to the threshold, from the threshold to the exterior, till at length the lingering symbol totally removes, and the fearful word Ichabod is inscribed alike upon the pulpit and the pews.

Many serve themselves instead of God, even by the work of the ministry. Some by entering upon it merely with a view to temporal support. Ashamed to beg, unwilling to work, they crouch for a piece of silver, and say, "Put me into the priest's office, that I may eat a morsel of bread." "They teach for hire, and divine for money;" and on this account are stigmatised in Scripture as "greedy dogs that can never have enough," as "shepherds that do not understand, looking every one for his gain from his quarter." This prevails to a most awful extent in every established church in Christendom, and necessarily must do so, as long as human nature remains what it is, and so many pulpits are at the disposal of secular patronage. Nor is it altogether unknown amongst the body of dissenters. A man whom indolence has led to this office, and who has converted the pulpit into the hiding place of the sloth, is one of the meanest, as he certainly is one of the guiltiest, of his species. Sometimes his punishment comes in this world, and he is driven out by an indignant people, who determine no

longer to starve their souls in order to support his body; or if, like a wolf, he continue to feed and fatten upon the flock, it is only for the hour of approaching destruction. "But I am persuaded better things of you, although I thus speak."

Others serve themselves in the ministry by entering it chiefly with a view to literary leisure and scientific pursuits. You know my sentiments on the importance of learning to the ministerial character too well, to suppose that I am now placing it under the ban of the pulpit. The pastoral office is neither the offspring nor the advocate of vandalism; it does not say to barbarism thou art my sister, nor to ignorance thou art my mother. You may draw the waters of the Castalian fountain, and cull the flowers of Parnassus. You may explore the world of mind with Locke, or the laws of matter with Newton, but not as the end of your entering the ministerial office. The pulpit, and not the study, is the summit on which your eye is to be fixed, and all the intense application of the latter is but to prepare you for a more commanding eminence upon the former. A thirst for literary pursuits, if your highest object, might lift you farther above the contempt of your fellow creatures, than an indolent regard to temporal support, but will not elevate you one step nearer to the approbation of your God; it might place you upon earth's pinnacle, but only to be smitten after all by heaven's lightnings; it might procure for you the brightest and the purest crown of worldly glory, but only to be quenched amidst the blackness of darkness for ever.

Not a few make the ministerial office tributary to the acquisition of mere popular applause. Vox populi is their directory and their aim. To commend them-

selves, is the secret but powerful spring of all they do. Self is with them in the study directing their reading, selecting their texts, arranging their thoughts, forming their images, and all with a view to shine in public. Thus prepared, they ascend the pulpit with the same object which conducts the actor to the stage, to secure the applause of approving spectators; every tone is modulated, every emphasis laid, every attitude regulated, to please rather than to profit; to recommend themselves and not Jesus Christ. The service ended, this bosom idol returns with them to their own abode, renders them restless and uneasy to know how they have succeeded, and puts them upon the meanest acts to draw forth the opinion of their hearers. If admired, they receive their reward; if not, the first prize is lost. It is nothing in abatement of the sin, that all this while evangelical sentiments are uttered. Orthodoxy is the most direct road to popularity. Christ may be the text, when self is the sermon; and dreadful as it seems, it is to be feared that not a few have elevated the cross only to suspend upon the sacred tree their own honours, and have employed all the glories of redemption merely to emblazon their own name. My dear brother, when carried to this height, it is the direst, deepest tragedy, that was ever performed by man, since it ends in the actual and eternal death of the performer, who forgets, as he snuffs the gale of popular applause, that it bears the vapours of damnation.

But you are a minister, that is, a servant, of God; and as such are to sum up all your life and labours in that one sublime and comprehensive direction, "Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." From this hour till your tongue cease to articulate and your heart

be cold, your business, your pleasure, your aim must be to serve God in the ministry of the gospel, by seeking his glory in the salvation of immortal souls. Whatever other men do, and are permitted to do, this is your duty. Without retiring to the gloom and indolence of monastic seclusion, you have in the best sense of the term, taken the veil to God. Before that altar on which the Son of God offered up himself a sacrifice to sin, you have taken the vow of separation to the world. You profess to have relinquished the career of commerce, fame, wealth, and every other road through which the human spirit marches to the gratification of an earthly ambition, and to be so filled with a desire to glorify God in the salvation of souls, that you could stand upon the mount which the Saviour occupied when under satanic temptation, and refuse all the kingdoms of the world, rather than give up the object which now fills your heart and occupies your hands. To the accomplishment of this you are to bring all the talents you possess, all the solicitude you can feel, all the influence you can command, and all the time you are destined to live; for you are not your own, but the minister of God.

3. This expression implies also that you are responsible to God. Your presidency over the church is neither sovereign nor legislative, but administrative only, and therefore you are accountable for its exercise to him from whom it is derived. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." No man has more to account for at that day, and with no man will the Judge be more strict in his requirements, than a minister of the gospel. In that day of terrors, disclosures will be made that will amaze all worlds; but when the veil of secrecy, which now conceals so many unthought of

matters, shall be rent asunder, nothing so fearful shall be discovered as a faithless minister of God. At sight of him, as he goes trembling to the throne, the countenance of the Judge glows with more terrible indignation; the thunder rolls with seven-fold terrors; a shriek of horror involuntarily escapes from the hosts of the redeemed; while a fiend-like shout is uttered by all other monsters of iniquity, over an instance of depravity whose aggravations swell above the heinousness of theirs. What will the miserable creature say to such sounds as these. "Thou wicked and slothful servant, wherefore hast thou lived for thyself? Where are the souls I entrusted to thy care? What hast thou done with thy time and thy talents? How hast thou lived, and how preached?" But I forbear, the scene is too awful even to be imagined. At that day, and before that tribunal you and I must meet again. Then all our motives and our conduct will be known. I shall witness your degradation or honour, and you will witness mine. Oh that we could make the judgment-seat of Christ the polar star of all our conduct, and preach and live as with the scenery of that day ever present to our imagination.

II. The text instructs us in what way the duties of our office should be discharged, so as to approve ourselves the ministers of God. We should approve ourselves to God, to the church, to the world. This expression implies that we not only assume the pastoral character, but that we commend ourselves to all who have an opportunity of observing our conduct, as faithfully and fully discharging its duties. In a parallel passage to this we are exhorted "to make full proof of our ministry." 2 Tim., iv, 6. According to M'Knight,

the original word signifies "to be carried with full sail." This allusion, if it be just, is as instructive as it is beautiful. While some men who have nothing of the minister but the name, ignorant, indolent, and useless, are like empty and dismantled hulks moored in some narrow creek; do you find your emblem in the richly freighted vessel gliding with every sail set before the breeze of heaven, and traversing the ocean to enrich her employers with her precious cargo. The apostle has particularly specified in the verses which follow the text, in what way this may be effected: "In much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in strifes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by a holy spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report." Leaving this beautiful directory to find its own weight, I shall class your duties in the following order:

1. Approve yourself the minister of God by faithfully preaching his word. This is to be a great part of the business of your future life. I trust you will ever keep the pulpit sacred to the purpose for which it is erected. Preach there the word of God. It is the chair neither of philosophy nor of literature, and therefore whatever illustrations you may at any time borrow from the sciences, or to whatever use you may apply the aids of learning in the way of legitimate criticism, never act there the pedant. It is not the rostra of political declamation, and should never be enveloped in the mists of politics. It is not the arena of controversy

where the preacher is to display his adroitness in attack and defence, and therefore however necessary you may sometimes find it to guard the truth from the assaults of its adversaries, or to direct the whole artillery of just reasoning upon the strongholds of error, I trust the character of your public ministrations will not, in the strict sense of the term, be polemical. It is not intended to be a stall, where the petty manufacturer of tinsel eloquence and rhetorical flowers shall display to a gaping crowd his gaudy wares; and therefore whenever you employ "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," I hope it will not be with a view to play the orator, but more deeply to impress the heart, and more powerfully to alarm the conscience. Nor is the pulpit merely the seat of the moralist, where Epictetus and Seneca deliver their cold and heartless ethics, but it is the oracle of heaven, appointed to deliver in full and faithful response the will and purposes of God concerning the salvation and the duty of the human race.

In pursuance of this idea, I shall remind you, of the matter of your preaching.

Take care that it is truly and faithfully the word of God. May you be guarded from delivering error instead of truth. Oh! how tremblingly afraid should we be of substituting the inventions of human ignorance for the doctrines of divine inspiration. How earnestly should we pray to be led into all truth. How cautiously should we search the Word of God. Should we err, in all probability we shall not have the privilege of erring alone. A preacher of error stands as a sort of volcano in the moral world: his mind is the dreadful laboratory where the mischief is prepared; his lips the crater whence it is disgorged upon the world; and every ser-

mon that he preaches an irruption of lava upon the moral interests of mankind. No man has so much cause to tremble at those fearful words as a minister: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Guided by the Spirit of God, may you steer in safety through this Scylla and Charybdis.

Preach the whole counsel of God. Elucidate its histories; explain its prophecies; develope its doctrines; inculcate its precepts; denounce its threatenings; unfold its promises; repeat its invitations; enforce its institutions. What a sublimity, what a variety, what a harmony, of subjects is before you! If you are straightened it must be in yourself, not in your themes. As a steward of the mysteries of the kingdom you have access to infinite and exhaustless stores. If your people are starved by the penury, or wearied by the sameness of your preaching, it cannot be for want of variety or opulence in the treasures of revelation, but for want of industry and fidelity in yourself. Do not then confine yourself and your people in some little nook or corner of revealed truth, and write upon all the rest, terra incognita. Explore for them and with them the whole world of inspiration. Such is the boundless extent of this sacred territory, that without wishing or waiting for farther revelations, we shall never reach the end of those already given. By the aid of Biblical criticism, diligent reading, accurate collation, deep penetration,

the Christian student will be continually disclosing to his people new regions and fresh treasures in God's most precious Word. Mines of wealth will open at his feet, and prospects of ineffable beauty will expand before his eye. If you follow this advice, you will not be known, like some, by a particular topic. The ministers of the gospel have no more right to divide between them the different parts of divine revelation, each taking only his favourite doctrine, than they have to share between them, or attempt to do so, the moral qualifications of the ministerial character, each selecting some insulated grace, and neglecting all the rest. Our preaching and our conduct should be a spiritual microcosm, the former in relation to truth, the latter to holiness.

Still, after all, and in perfect consistency with what I have already advanced, I remind you that, as a minister of the New Testament, you are to be "a sweet savour of Christ." In this respect you cannot have a better model than the great apostle of the Gentiles. "I determined," says he, "to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." No phrase has been less understood than preaching Christ. By some it has been confined to the eternal repetition of a few common-place thoughts upon the same first principles of divine truth. The epistles of St. Paul are the best exposition of this phrase, for as he determined to know nothing, i.e., to make known nothing, but Christ, of course he intends that everything he did make known, should be considered as an accomplishment of this purpose. Now what a vast variety, what a mighty range of topic do we

find in his epistles. There we find the whole compass of doctrinal theology, the whole body of practical divinity, positive institutions, church government, social duties, sketches of Old Testament history, a complete exposition of the ceremonial law; and yet all this was making known Christ. His cross is the centre of the whole system, around which, in nearer or more remote circles, all the doctrines and the duties of revelation perpetually revolve; from which the former borrow their light, and the latter their energy. Let all your preaching be directed to exhibit Christ in the dignity of his person, the design of his mediation, the variety of his offices, the freeness of his grace, the nature of his kingdom, and the perfect beauty of his example. And thus, while you cause your people to scent the fragrance of every flower, and taste the sweetness of every fruit in the garden of the Lord, you will more statedly collect them round the tree of life in the midst of the garden, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Much may be said of the manner of your preaching. An air of deep seriousness should characterise our whole deportment while delivering the Word of God. The pulpit is the most solemn situation, and preaching the most solemn employment upon earth, to which we should ever bring "that awe which warns us how we touch a holy thing." Not only should all merriment and jocularity be excluded, but all that flippancy of manner, that light and frivolous air, that careless and irreverend expression, that "start and stare theatric" which are but too common in the present age. Every look, every tone, every gesture, should indicate a mind awed by the presence of God, impressed with the solemnity of eternity; should bespeak a heart filled with the

magnitude of its own salvation, and oppressed with solicitude for the souls of others; in short, should manifest a consciousness of our being "in a temple resounding with awful voices, and filled with holy inspirations." In the pulpit, we seem placed between the three worlds of heaven, earth, and hell, to unfold, as they lie expanded before our imagination, the glories of the first, the vanity of the second, and the torments of the third. Can we really be in earnest, or will our hearers think us so, or be likely to become so themselves, unless we discover a deep and impressive seriousness in some measure adapted to our situation?

All our preaching should have a holy and moral tendency. Great pains have been taken by two opposite classes of preachers and writers to introduce a schism between the Son of God and the legislator of the Jews. The tables of the Law and the Cross have been opposed, like hostile forts upon Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary, to demolish each other. Impious effort! Have nothing to do with it, my brother, but let your preaching be a sublime response to the song of Moses and the Lamb. The truth as it is in Jesus is "according to godliness." No doctrine is given merely for the purpose of intellectual speculation: even those which transcend the comprehension of reason, are designed to produce a moral effect, by humbling our pride and increasing our submission. The truths of Scripture are revealed, not simply on their own account, nor is the knowledge of them the last and highest end for which they are communicated. "Sanctify them," said the Saviour, in his sublime prayer, "by thy truth; thy word is truth." Hence we gather that sanctification, or moral benefit, is the ultimate end, so far as man is concerned, of revealed

truth. No preaching, therefore, can be scriptural, however apparently true its abstract sentiments may be, which does not represent those sentiments in such a manner as to have a practical tendency. Many, without intending to be antinomian preachers, certainly make antinomian hearers, not by telling them to be unholy, but by leaving them to be so. That can never be true in sentiment which is not holy in tendency. Let your sermons be like sunbeams, quickening and cherishing the virtues of the heart, at the same time that they convey the light of doctrine to the understanding.

Let your discourses be replete with instruction. It is greatly to be regretted that many professors of religion seem to regard judicious and instructive preaching as lying within the frigid zone of Christianity, and as eagerly migrate from the regions of intellect as birds of passage to a warmer climate at the approach of winter. Their religion is all feeling, with which the understanding has nothing to do, either in the way of exciting or controling it. Their conversation is made up of terms which they but imperfectly understand, and of crude conceptions which they could with difficulty explain. The fault in this case lies, to a great extent, in the pulpit. They have heard but few ideas there, and never venture beyond the track which their spiritual guides have marked out for them. I trust you will avoid a loose, empty, and declamatory style of preaching, and fill your sermons with theological truths clearly conceived, and perspicuously expressed. It is a painful circumstance, that in the march of improvement mankind seldom gain an advantage without an attendant inconvenience. The present method of delivering ser-

mons, unshackled by notes, is incalculably more adapted to impression than the motionless, unimpassioned, scholastic reading of the last age. But is there no danger of losing in instruction what we gain in impression? The preaching of some men forcibly reminds us of the breaking open of the cave of Æolus, and letting loose the winds. To a thinking mind, nothing is more ridiculous than to see a man blustering about in a perfect vacuity of ideas; the hearer finds himself in the situation of a traveller who is suddenly overtaken by a storm in a wilderness, from which he feels happy to escape as speedily as possible. You will not conclude from anything I have said, that you are to undervalue an easy, graceful, energetic enunciation; on the contrary, this is of so much importance, that without it the most admirable sermon is stripped of more than half its power to please or to profit. As a Christian speaker, you should never forget the opinion of Demosthenes, that the first, and the second, and the third grace of an orator is pronunciation. It is perfectly obvious that the most useful preachers owe much of their success, under God, to an easy and pleasant method of delivery.

Let your preaching be characterised by plainness. Be ingenuous in the avowal of your religious sentiments. Let not the "trumpet give an uncertain sound." As an honest man, speak honestly. I do not enjoin a dogmatical tone and temper; still, I admonish you to use no concealment. Let not your sermons be mere pulpit riddles, or ambiguous as the responses of the Delphic oracle. Do not compel your hearers to throw your discourses into a critical alembic, to see if, by the application of a sort of chemical process, a few drops of orthodoxy may be extracted.

Let your perspicuity extend to your language. "Use great plainness of speech." I do not mean vulgarity or buffoonery; these are disgusting everywhere, but in the pulpit they are actually profane. In the house of God, the view of the worshippers ought ever to terminate in heaven or hell, neither of which is a fit subject for laughter. Some preachers seem to have no idea that they can handle a subject plainly, till they have dragged it through all the mire in which their own coarse and grovelling nature loves to wallow. Provided other and higher properties be found in it, that is the best sermon which conforms most accurately to the rules of correct taste. Now perspicuity is the first grace of good composition. Attentive and enlightened observers have marked in many of the dissenting ministers of the present age a strong tendency to a glaring and bombastic style, by which the truths that should affect the conscience lose all their effect, by a mode of representation which bewilders the imagination. For what the bulk of their congregations understand, some men may just as well preach Latin or Greek, as the technical, high-flown, far-fetched language which they have adopted in violation of every rule of good taste, as well as in neglect of a still more awful responsibility. What should we say of the messenger who was sent to a condemned malefactor with instructions to inform him how to gain a reprieve, but who, instead of explaining to him the means of life in the plainest and speediest manner, dressed up his commission in such high-wrought terms that the poor criminal did not comprehend them, and so lost his life, because this vain and cruel wretch chose to display his skill in elaborate composition. And what shall be said of that man who, being charged with the

offer of divine mercy to guilty rebels, suffers them to perish for lack of knowledge, because he chooses to announce the means of reconciliation in hard words and fine flowers? Has language any terms of reprobation sufficiently severe for such a minister?

II. Approve yourself the minister of God, by the manner in which you preside over this church.

I speak from ten years' experience when I assure you that preaching is the easiest part of a pastor's duty. You are now "to take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseer." You are to take the direction of its spiritual concerns, and by the right application of all the principles of church government, to promote "the increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." You are not to "lord it over God's heritage," for this would be to minister for yourself, and not for him whose right alone it is to reign. Not that I imagine you are without authority; for an office without authority seems to me an absurdity. The prerogative of a minister, if it be less than some spiritual despots claim, is unquestionably more than many ecclesiastical democrats are willing to concede. By too many he is considered only in the light of a speaking brother, the mere appendage of a pulpit. Such persons are actuated by a very short-sighted policy in relation to their spiritual interests, since it is impossible to degrade the office without lowering the officer; and when they cease to look up with respect to a minister, they will certainly cease to profit by his instructions. Whatever authority you possess here, you should ever maintain with the meekness of one who remembers that it is for another, and not for himself.

Let a ruling principle of regard for the interests of

the church, and the authority of Christ in his house, be visible in all you do, so as to establish in the breasts of your people a full conviction that you are never seeking merely to gratify yourself. Never appear fond of your own plans, simply as yours, nor obstinately adhere to them, in opposition to the wishes of the church. A bishop must not be self-willed. What we gain by obstinacy, we lose in respect, and there is a way even of conceding, that will increase our superiority. In affairs of importance, and in measures that are likely to startle by their novelty, never be above imparting your views and intentions to the officers and experienced members of the church. Some men, who have had more jealousy for their authority than ability to support it, have done themselves irreparable mischief by appearing to despise the advice of those to whose wisdom they might have listened with incalculable advantage.

It belongs to you, my brother, to keep up with vigour the spiritual police of this city of the Lord. Maintain, therefore, the scriptural discipline of the church. The pastor who neglects this, is planting thorns, either for himself or his successor to tread upon. Remember that troublesome members are much more easily kept out than put out. Never sacrifice the purity of the church at the shrine of Mammon. A man who is brought into the society for the sake of his wealth, will generally prove like the Babylonish garment and the wedge of gold which Achan concealed, the trouble of the camp. Such an individual has often lived to be the "bible of the minister, the patron of the living, and the wolf of the flock."

Study characters. Know the disposition of every member of your church, not with a design to flatter or

to cringe, but "to rule well." Give no encouragement to the bold and forward. Never promote discussion at your church meetings; it will sooner or later do mischief. The tongues of a popular assembly are more easily excited than controlled. The principles of the Independent form of church government must not be pushed too far. Like some of the doctrines of revelation, they require great wisdom in those who state them, to prevent their being abused. I heartily subscribe to the opinion of the late venerable Booth: "Notwithstanding the fickleness and caprice of many private professors with regard to their ministers, it has long appeared probable to me, that a majority of those uneasinesses, animosities, and separations, which, to the disgrace of religion, take place between pastors and their several churches, may be traced up either to the unchristian tempers, to the gross imprudence, or to the laziness and neglects of the pastors themselves."*

III. Approve yourself as a minister of God, by the character of your visits to the houses of your flock.

As an under shepherd of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will labour to say, in imitation of him, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine." Endeavour to conduct all your private intercourse with your friends in such a manner as that their esteem may be conciliated by all they see of you. Happy would it be for some ministers, and happy for their people too, if they could always be seen at the distance of the pulpit, their failings would then be lost, like the spots of the sun, amidst the blaze of public splendour with which they are invested, but upon a nearer inspection are too broad and dark to be

* "Pastoral Cautions," p. 8: a charge which every minister of the gospel might read with profit once a month.

unnoticed. Like the works of nature, in opposition to those of art, our character should appear the fairer, in proportion as it is microscopically inspected.

Let all your visits be appropriate. Go as the minister of God, and go to approve yourself such. It is in private that you can make full proof of your ministry, by an affectionate solicitude for the spiritual welfare of your flock; by devoting your personal intercourse to some valuable purpose; by retracing and retouching the impressions produced in the public service of God. There, nothing can be set down to a thirst for popularity, but all will be traced up to a heart devoted to your work. Never do we seem so dear to the hearts of our people, as when in their own houses we manifest an affectionate anxiety for their eternal salvation. How much better, how much more elevated and characteristic is this, than that low jocoseness and familiarity in which some indulge. I do not wish you to be a mere ministerial spectre, haunting the abodes of your flock shrouded in sullen gloom, terrifying everybody from your presence, and creating a solitude wherever you come; but even this is almost better than the constant levity of a buffoon. Maintain a dignity of behaviour, especially in the season of innocent cheerfulness, but never degenerate into frivolity. Weight of character is of immense importance to you, it will give an additional momentum to every sermon you preach; and this is gained or lost in secret. It should be perpetually remembered by you when in company, that the same persons who see you there, will on the approaching sabbath be sitting at your feet to receive instruction.

I trust, my dear brother, you will not by any part of your conduct lead your people to conclude that they

cannot please you better than by asking you to a feast. Do not appear fond of celebrating the private carnival. This is one of the many roads that lead to contempt. Jesus, your great master, should in this respect be your model; not only as a preacher upon the Mount, but as a visitor in the house of Mary.

Your visits should not be long. You have no time for this, and indeed it is not necessary. Half an hour, or an hour well improved, would give you an opportunity of saying very much that is useful. Avoid the character of a lounger and a gossip. You are to teach the value of time, and will do this best, practically.

Your visits should be impartial. Many pastors by confining their attention to a few families, have alienated a large portion of their flock from themselves, and sown the seeds of lasting jealousy between the different members of the church. It cannot be supposed, in the common course of things, that you will have no private friendships; but what I mean is, that these are not to be allowed to interfere with your official and universal obligations. As the common centre of the society, you are to unite all hearts to each other, by uniting them all to yourself. Especially remember the sick and the poor.

Let your visits be seasonable; and if they are seasonable, I am sure they will not be late in the evening. Always sup at home. Late visiting is an enemy to family religion, domestic order, private devotion, early rising, diligent study, and by a last undulation, the mischief reaches the pulpit itself.

IV. Approve yourself a minister of God by your general conduct, spirit, and habits.

1. By the unsullied purity of your outward conduct.

If every private Christian should be a fair copy of His example, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, think what your deportment should be, who are to be "a pattern to believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Read St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, and there learn the vast importance to be attached to the most scrupulous regard to all the branches of true holiness. "Oh! I could shed tears of blood, and drown my Bible with my tears," to think of the misconduct of those who have filled the office you now occupy. The sins of teachers are the teachers of sins, and have done more to hinder the cause of truth than all the ravings of infidelity from the time of the crucifixion. Indeed it is in the pulpit of an unholy ministry that infidelity builds her nest; it is there the vulture brood is hatched which prey upon the offal of corrupt profession, and by the righteous retribution of Jehovah seize first upon the character of a wicked priesthood. An ungodly minister is the most awfully guilty, and the most fatally mischievous character in existence: he is a living curse, a walking pestilence, diffusing around him wherever he goes, a savour of death, from whom, as to any voluntary association, every friend of holiness should retire with greater horror than from a person infected with the plague. His name is Apollyon: his work destruction. It is dreadful to reflect what multitudes are now in the bottomless pit, who were conducted thither by the damnable heresies of such men's lives; from whose imprecations, envenomed by despair, the guilty authors of their ruin will find neither escape nor shelter through everlasting ages, but feel the guilt of blood for ever upon their wretched souls.

It is not enough for us to be without criminality; our character, like that of a female, must, to be reputable, be without suspicion. There must be no cloud of mystery hanging about us. We must keep at the farthest remove from every thing wrong, and avoid the very appearance of evil. "If a minister be not overcome by vice, may he not fall by error, by vanity, by indolence, by dulness? If he escapes from gross immorality, may not his excellencies be tarnished; his talents be injured, his usefulness defeated, by imprudencies? May there not be indulgencies at the table where there is no gluttony? May there not be tippling where there is no intoxication? May there not be levities and liberties where there is no violation of virtue? May there not be, especially in the young minister, an assumption of consequence, a creation of trouble, an inattention to order and regularity, which, while he supposes that it indicates genius, will not fail to lower him in the esteem and hope of the families he deranges and disgusts? If he avoid worldly, may he not indulge in religious dissipation; constantly going into festive circles of spiritual triflers and gossips; spending his evenings generally from home; retiring late to rest, and never rising early? If he be not chargeable with filthy conversation which is not lawful, may he not err in foolish talking and jesting which is not convenient? May he not be the rattle, or the harlequin of the room? If he be not inflammatory, may he not be a mere newsmonger, or a noisy dabbler in party politics?"* We occupy a very public station; like the angel standing in the sun, we must be seen.

* The Rev. Wm. Jay's Sermon, delivered at the Ordination of the Rev. H. F. Burder, A.M.

The least approach to iniquity, by us, will be seen by many eyes, and published by many tongues. Do not affect a haughty indifference to public opinion. What others think is wrong, avoid even though you should know it to be innocent. Conform to such errors rather than lessen the weight, or obscure the beauty of your character.

2. By the prosperous state of your personal piety. Take heed to the state of your own heart. Accustomed as we are to treat religion as a science to be theoretically investigated, and an object of controversy to be polemically defended, we are in danger without great watchfulness, of merging the Christian in the professional divine; and he makes but a poor divine, as to any practical effect, who is but a lukewarm Christian. "The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth and addeth learning to his lips." "It is from the pastor's defects considered in the light of a disciple, that his principal difficulties and dangers arise." Do not, my dear brother, as many have done, mistake gifts for grace, and judge of the real state of your own personal piety, by your readiness in thinking and speaking upon holy things. No man is in greater danger of self deception, as to the real state of his own heart, than he who has to deal officially with the hearts of others. This will require the exercise of incessant vigilance, close inspection and keen discrimination in the closet, where I hope you will spend no inconsiderable portion of your time.

Here I cannot conceal my apprehension, that as in many other respects, so especially in vital godliness and a devotional spirit, the present race of Christian ministers come far behind their predecessors. It has

occurred to other and older men than myself, that in many who of late years have entered into the pastoral office, a very considerable defect of serious and spiritual feeling is lamentably obvious. There is a frivolity of deportment which, though far removed from immorality, appears as if they wished to conciliate the affections of their people rather as cheerful companions in the parlour, than as faithful preachers in the pulpit; and as if they sought to render themselves more attractive, by displacing the holy seriousness of the ministerial character, in order to make way for a little nearer approximation to the man of fashion and the world. It would be a circumstance to be deplored in tears of blood, if our ministers should extensively lose the spirit of vital piety; for as they give the tone to their congregations, it would soon be followed by a general resemblance of our flocks to the palsied church at Laodicea.

The principles of dissent, although they have no indirect connexion with a spirit of enquiry, and the cause of genuine liberty, derive their chief value from the influence which they exert upon the interests of experimental religion; and when they cease by any cause to exert that influence, their value is depreciated, their importance diminished, their glory is departed. Let us look to the fathers of dissent, to the illustrious nonconformists, not as authorities to bind our conscience, but as examples to stimulate our diligence, and especially our diligence as men of God. The ponderous volumes of their learning and divinity do not contain so much to confound us, as the diaries of their religious experience. One page of Philip Henry's life makes me blush more than all the folios of his son Matthew's peerless exposition.

Attend then, my brother, to the state of religion in your own heart. Seek to have all your intellectual attainments consecrated by a proportionate growth in grace. Let not your knowledge spread over the upper regions of the soul like the aurora borealis over the face of a wintry sky, while the world spreads out below, cold, cheerless, and dark; but let it resemble the orb of day, which warms and quickens the earth at the time he gilds and glorifies the heaven. Endeavour to feel more yourself of all that is involved in genuine religion. Feel more and you will speak better. All men are orators when they feel. And the language of a heart feeling adequately for the glory of God and the salvation of men, would have an unction and an energy more resistless than the thunders of Demosthenes, and the vivid lightnings that flashed in the invectives of Cicero.

3. By exemplary diligence. You are of course to be diligent in all the public duties of your office. You are always to look like a man that has much to do, and whose heart is set on doing it. You must always act with the diligence of one who feels the care of immortal souls giving speed to his feet and contrivance to his thoughts. Indolence never appears in the full display of its ugly form, nor in the exact dimensions of its guilt, till it is seen in the garb of the clerical character. Apply all the energies of your soul to the duties of your office. Catechise the young; visit the sick; search out the persons whom your sermons have impressed, and deepen the impression by private conversation; encourage the embarrassed to bring to you their perplexities; guide the young enquirer; hasten to console the aged pilgrim; go any where, and at any time to do

good; in short, watch for souls as one "that must give account."

Be diligent in the private duties of your study. I enjoin this upon you with peculiar earnestness. You cannot preach so as to edify your people and secure their esteem, except you devote much time to private intellectual toil. Whatever you may be in the social circle, you never can long secure their respect without appearing respectable as a preacher. If you fail in the place that I now occupy, not the sweetness, no, nor the piety of an angel would keep you from sinking in their opinion. Congregations in the metropolis, where the private intercourse between a pastor and his flock must necessarily be restricted by the distance of their abodes, are raised and retained by the force of pulpit attractions. Surrounded as you are by men of popular talents, unless you preach the word with ability, "the ways of your Zion will soon mourn because none come to her solemn feasts, and in the time of her affliction she will remember all the pleasant things she had in the days of old."

It is greatly to be regretted that very many young men, who, during the early part of their preparatory studies, appear the fairest blossoms in all the academic grove, disappoint the hopes they had excited, and yield but ordinary fruit. Two reasons may be assigned for this. The first is, they are sometimes plucked too soon;*

* Here I cannot reprobate in terms sufficiently strong, the impatience of some churches to induce young men to leave the advantages of the academy, before the term of education is expired; and the inconsiderate folly of those students, who hearken to such seductive solicitations. This practice is a deadly blow aimed, certainly at the respectability, if not at the very existence of the dissenting interest. The Independent body, unsupported by any general combination of

and the second, that, even when gathered in a state of academic maturity, instead of improving, as they should do, by time and care, they become corrupted by indolence, and then sink in the public estimation as rapidly as they seemed at one time likely to ascend. Many young men, unfortunately, cease to be students when they begin to be ministers. They enter upon their office with a stock of ideas, which would be a sufficient capital for attaining to intellectual wealth, if properly improved by industry; but unfortunately, flattered by the foolish, and caressed perhaps for a season by the wise, they act like persons who, coming suddenly into possession of a small fortune, begin to live imme-

strength and talent, rests for its permanence, in the order of means at least, upon the individual character and talent of its ministers. Even ignorance, when it has the stay of consolidated numbers, may present an imposing aspect, and promise continuance; but when left to struggle insulated and unsupported, it cannot long continue to maintain its ground. May we not trace up to this practice, many of those instances which so frequently occur of ministerial inefficiency and moral failure. In most cases, the term of education is already too short for the present state of the world; and therefore to curtail it is an injury done, not only to the individual church and pastor concerned, but to the cause at large. Should this pamphlet be read by any who are still enjoying advantages of academic instruction, I would recommend the subject to their most serious attention. Never were college years so important as now. The age in which we live is characterised by unprecedented activity for the diffusion of religious truth. Societies embracing in their members all classes of persons, and in their design all kinds of objects, are in beneficial operation. To these a minister is expected to give his countenance and influence. Much of his time must necessarily be employed in this way. The hours spent in committee meetings alone, in any large town, are incalculable. All this must be taken from the study. How important then is it, that before a minister plunge into this active routine, a good store of useful knowledge be laid up in the academy. And I therefore exhort every student to remain, except in very extraordinary cases, to the last hour of the allotted term, at his preparatory studies, and to make the most of every hour.

diately upon the principal, abandon themselves to idleness, and sink to contempt. During the greater part of the week they may be found anywhere but in their study; running all over the city or country to public meetings; sauntering about the houses of their flock in everybody's way; debating upon the conduct of the government with every gossiping politician they can pick up; or else idly reading the fashionable and, much of it, worthless poetry of the age, in their own parlours. Saturday arrives, and with it all the tremors and dread produced by the recollection that it is to be followed by the sabbath. A volume is taken from the shelf, a text selected, perhaps a sermon committed to memory, or else a few meagre thoughts resembling Pharaoh's thin and blighted ears of corn, are gleaned from the stubble of a mind whose scanty crop has long since been carried off. Thus equipped, the preacher goes to his pulpit and his people, with no higher ambition than to get through without actually stopping. "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed," till at length they are literally compelled, in order to save themselves from starvation, to break the fences of their field, and roam in quest of pasture more suited to their taste and more adequate to their wants.

"Give attention, then, to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." St. Paul, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a proficient in all the knowledge of the age, and in addition to this, blessed with the power of miracles and the gift of celestial inspiration, was certainly the minister, if one ever existed, who might have dispensed with diligent application to study; and yet this great man, when imprisoned at Rome, and looking forward to his approaching martyrdom, commanded his books and his

parchments to be brought him. Here, then, is an example worthy your imitation.

If anything more need be said to enforce this duty, I might remind you of the present state of society at large in regard to education. An ignorant minister might have done very well in an age when all knowledge was confined to the priesthood, when "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the peoples;" but science and literature are now so widely diffused, even among the middling classes, that no small measure of information is requisite to enable a minister to converse advantageously with his flock.

Unless, therefore, you intend to devote eight hours a day to your study, I have no very strong expectation that you will long retain this pulpit. To secure such a portion of time as this, it will be necessary to guard against the temptations to neglect, with which a ministerial station in this mighty city must ever be attended. You will of course be expected to use your influence in cherishing that public spirit, which, like the holy fire, now burns upon the altar of the Lord. Still you must not suffer foreign duties to interfere with those to be discharged at home. Public meetings and public speeches are become very common, and are certainly very useful. I am not by any means reprobating them, but only reminding you that they should not be suffered to draw a young minister too much from his study and his flock. Guard against all unnecessary party visits. Never, never, become a political partisan; this may render you popular with a certain class, but it will consume your time, embitter your spirit, diminish the weight of your ministerial character, and considerably obstruct the success of your labours.

4. By prudence. This is a virtue inferior in importance only to piety, and still more rare even than that. It is almost the first grace we need, and generally the last we acquire. Imprudence is one of the greatest enemies of the pastoral office, and considering the mischief which it frequently occasions when exhibited in such a situation, approaches so near to immorality, that the most skilful casuist might be challenged to point out the line of distinction. It is a most melancholy reflection how often the greatest talents have, as to all their beneficial influence upon society, been completely neutralised by the imprudence of their thoughtless possessor. On the other hand, it is most encouraging and instructive to mark with how slender a portion of knowledge many a minister has done extensive good in the world, because what little stock of ideas he possessed, was disposed of to the best advantage by a cautious and prudent temper. Thus, while the former blazed and wandered like a comet through an eccentric career, to little visible advantage, though attended for a season with much public admiration, the latter, although dim perhaps, yet remained steady as the polar star, which guides the mariner, though it may never have excited his wonder. Our blessed Lord set a high value upon this qualification, when he enjoined his disciples to "be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Without degenerating into an artful, crafty, intriguing disposition; or freezing, by a cold, selfish, and calculating temper, the genial current of benevolence, endeavour to acquire a cautious, deliberative, predictive sort of mind, which, with the quickness and the certainty of instinct, shall show you the consequences of action before you act.

5. By a kind, affectionate disposition. "God is

love, and hath commended his love towards us" in a manner that will fill the universe with astonishment through everlasting ages. Can we approve ourselves the ministers of such a God without that "charity which is kind?" Is not his love the theme of our ministrations? Shall we carry about in us this balm for healing the world, and the vessel partake none of its odour? It was a beautiful picture which a deistical physician drew of the late Dr. Gillies, of Glasgow, when he said he believed that John Gillies would be glad to carry all mankind to heaven in his bosom. May no deist ever be able to say anything worse of you. It is of immense importance, that as ministers we should be distinguished by "whatsoever things are lovely." There should be a kindness of heart, a sweetness of disposition, a gentleness, in those who have to win souls to Christ, suitable to the instruments of reconciliation. Amenity of temper and manners carries all the gifts of the mind, and all the graces of the heart to their highest polish and beauty. In the church there are some men of very excellent talents, who, as if courtesy were a heterodox virtue, are unfortunately of such rough, churlish, and petulant dispositions, that it requires an effort, like getting through a thorn hedge, to gather any fruit from their ministry.

6. By a habit of importunate prayer. I have no need to instruct you in the necessity of a divine influence to renew and sanctify the human heart. Of this doctrine you have just publicly avowed your entire conviction. But I would just remind you, that on this important article of your faith rests the incumbent duty of prayer. Ah, my brother, we want more of the spirit and grace of prayer. The acknowledgment of the

Psalmist ought to belong to us: "I give myself to prayer." The spirit of supplication should insinuate itself into all our habits, our plans, our operations. Those who honour God in secret, God will honour in public. It has been very generally remarked, that the most successful ministers have been the most eminent as men of prayer. Luther, it is said, devoted three hours every day to devotional exercises. Queen Mary of Scotland used to say of John Knox, "I fear that man's prayers more than the English army." The story of Mr. Bruce is well known. One sabbath, being unusually late before he appeared at the house of God, a msssenger was sent to hasten him, who, upon coming to his study door, heard him distinctly and vehemently affirm, "I will not go hence except thou go with me." Unwilling to disturb what he considered to be a conversation, the messenger returned with the report that Mr. Bruce was not likely to come soon, for he had heard him declare that he would not stir, unless a person who was in his study, and who seemed very reluctant to stir, would come with him. At length the man of God appeared, when such an unusual solemnity, unction, and effect, attended his words, as left no doubt upon the minds of the auditory who the Stranger was with whom Mr. Bruce, like another Israel, had wrestled and had prevailed. A man of prayer is always known without erecting his oratory at the corners of the streets, or proclaiming the hour of his retirement by the sound of a trumpet. If we are much with God, the effect, in a spiritual sense, will be very similar to the vision of his glory upon the face of Moses, when the people beheld the radiance of his countenance, and gazed with veneration upon the man who had seen the Lord.

By such conduct and such habits approve yourself as a minister of God. Any considerable defect in your ministerial conduct will be more quickly seen, and more powerfully felt, than in many other situations. You are called to occupy the pulpit of a man whose praise is in all the churches, and who being dead, yet speaks by the remembrance of his distinguished virtues, and the instructions of his valuable works. If unwearied application as a student, exemplary piety as a Christian, and unceasing attention to all the duties of the pastoral office, can render any one a model for his successor, then may you remember with affection, and imitate with advantage, the example of the late Mr. Buck. Thus may you cause your people, who so highly revered him, to rejoice that his mantle, which dropped as he arose, has been found by you, and that although they have lost their Elijah, the excellences which rendered him a blessing, survive and flourish in the character of his successor.

I trust you have made up your account to meet with trials. If Satan suffer you to go on without any thing to try your faith and your patience, it is a sign that he despises your efforts. If you bruise the head of the serpent, he will hiss; if you attack the lion in his den, he will roar. The world will perhaps revile you, and even friends may desert you. Your success may not be equal to your desires, and oftentimes the fairest blossoms of your ministerial hopes may be nipped. As a spiritual father, some of your own children may be peevish and rebellious: as a physician, who has to do with the maladies of the soul, you must expect that under the power of delirium, they will often treat you with the greatest unkindness, when engaged in the tenderest offices to restore them to a "sound mind."

Against these gloomy suggestions, I oppose others of a more encouraging nature. You have far more to enliven your hopes, than to excite your fears. Yours is the "ministry of reconciliation." You are to be employed on an embassy of peace. It is your honourable and delightful business to be engaged as an instrument in reconciling man to God, to himself, and to his fellow creatures.

Nor are you left to labour alone and unassisted. The promise of Jesus Christ, your great master, accompanies you to the spot you are to occupy and to cultivate in his vineyard: "Lo, I am with you." Yours is the ministration of the Holy Spirit. The clouds of heaven, "big with blessings," are already floating over the scene of your husbandry, ready to descend in fertilizing showers upon the seed you scatter.

Should your hopes be realised and your labours blessed, though in ever so small a degree; should you be the means of saving but one soul from everlasting death, you will "rejoice in the day of Christ that you have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain." It was a saying of Dr. Owen, that the salvation of a single soul was worth preaching to a whole nation for, during a long succession of years; but I trust many will be given to you who shall be "your joy and your crown of rejoicing." Then what a scene awaits you. In that illustrious day, when even the mighty works of Bacon, of Newton, of Milton shall be consumed by the general conflagration, and scattered with the ashes of the globe; when the most splendid productions of human genius, with all the choicest flowers of art, of literature, and of science, shall serve but to crown the funeral pile of expiring nature, and shall leave the scholar and the

artist without a single ray of glory to distinguish them amidst the crowds thronging the bar of judgment; when the names of the philosophers, and warriors, and legislators, who for thousands of years have been emblazoned in the annals of mankind, shall all be passed over in silence; then shall your name, my brother, be announced to assembled worlds, as having accomplished an immortal work; and when observing millions shall be awaiting the triumphs of that day, one glorified spirit, dressed in the robes of righteousness and salvation, shall advance from the right hand of the Judge, followed by another, and another, and another; while all together pointing to you, with transports of delight, shall exclaim, "Behold the minister, to whose faithful labours, under God, we owe our salvation." Then, when the eye of the universe shall be fixed upon you, and the voice of all that multitude, as the voice of many waters, shall rejoice over you, the great Master whom you serve will acknowledge your labours with smiles of ineffable complacency, and those words of mysterious condescension, "Well done, good and faithful servant, having approved thyself in all things a minister of God, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE CRISIS:

OR HOPE AND FEAR BALANCED, IN REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT SITUATION OF THE COUNTRY.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN EBENEZER CHAPEL, BIRMINGHAM,
ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 28, 1819.

"Who can tell if God will repent and turn away from his fierce anger: that we perish not."

The editor hesitated as to re-publishing this sermon, though it reached a second edition, but determined not to omit it, if it were only that it showed the views and feelings of religious men at the end of the war with the first Bonaparte, and during the commercial distress and political discontent which followed quickly upon it.

The author prefixed to it a statement that the political allusions were not in the sermon as preached, but were added on its being printed. It is not feared that just exception can be taken to them even now, when men have been so much more accustomed to deal with similar topics than was the generation which witnessed the Restoration of the Bourbons. At that day, patriotism was not the subject of many sermons which would be in unison with our present opinions. Now every one taking a public part in politics, finds it his interest to pretend to a love for freedom, even though its hereditary enemy, and opposing it wherever he can without danger to himself. Then, the notions of Lord Eldon and Lord Sidmouth governed the country, and for the most part influenced the press, the pulpit, and the family or convivial circle. The author of the following sermon was ever fondly attached to the liberties secured by the English constitution, and as he formed his opinions for himself, and held them when they brought him into discredit, his whiggism did not become more democratic when liberalism was professed in high places. In accordance with this sermon was a political speech which he delivered a little earlier, and which has escaped oblivion, through having been heard by Mr Commissioner Hill, the Recorder of Birmingham, who thus describes it in a letter which he sent to the editor on occasion of his father's death.

"The first time I remember to have heard him out of his pulpit was at a Town's Meeting, to celebrate the Peace of 1814. Attempts were made to declare the fate of Napoleon the triumph of narrow principles in politics. Your father was opposed to much older men, and perhaps to the prevailing tone of the assembly, but he boldly and with masculine eloquence defended his own liberal views, and his speech made an impression on me which will never be effaced."

The two philanthropists of late years occasionally saw each other at public meetings in Birmingham, and the minister never could refrain after his return home from expressing (for the most part to the editor), in his own hearty manner, his admiration of the mental power, learning, and benevolence of the Recorder.

Psalm cxlvii, 11.

The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Every manifestation which God has made of his nature, contains much that is awful, and much that is amiable; and it is the glory of Deity to be at once both infinitely great and infinitely good. This union of the grand and the lovely is to be seen on the face of nature, and in the administration of Providence, but is most clearly discovered in the pages of that inspired volume which was written to inform us, in some measure, what God is. There it is said "that God is love, and that he is a consuming fire; that vengeance belongs unto him, and that he delights in mercy; that he rides on the heavens, and yet is the Father of the fatherless, and a judge for the widows; that he is the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, and dwells in the holy place, and at the same time makes his abode with the man who is of an humble and a contrite spirit;" that he is seen against us in the purity and equity of the sentences of his law, and yet with us in the person and work of his Son. And as the essence of religion consists in the exercise of suitable dispositions towards this great and blessed God, and no dispositions can be suitable but

such as correspond to the entire revelation which he has made of his nature, the spirit of true piety is equally removed from unhallowed presumption on the one hand, and slavish despair on the other, and appears in its true character only when seen in the union of holy dread and humble confidence. Our reasons for fear are incalculably increased by the consciousness of our guilt, and can leave no room for any hope but that which rests exclusively upon the promise of mercy through Christ Jesus. Yet has God been graciously pleased to declare that he takes delight in those who fear him and hope in his mercy, that is, they are the objects of his peculiar and infinite regard. These pious dispositions should be exercised in relation to our spiritual, our temporal, and our national interests. In regard to each, we have much cause for fear, and much for hope. But it is only with the latter that I have to do on the present occasion.

Our country is a term of wide and most endearing import. Poetry has sung its charms, patriotism has been inspired by them, and piety has consecrated them. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," said this trio, when they had hung their harps on the willows, and sat weeping by Babylon's river, "let my right hand forget its cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth." The love of our country is not a mere chivalrous and romantic passion, but one of the noblest feelings that can do honour to man as a member of civil society. It is in the rational community what the great law of attraction is in the world of nature. As that causes the parts of individual bodies to cohere together, and at the same time balances and regulates in their places and motions the orbs forming the universe; so does this generous feeling preserve the identity of par-

ticular kingdoms, and prevent the elements of society from sinking into the restless confusion of a general chaos, or being scattered as by a centrifugal force in every possible direction. It is the foundation of the public virtues, and a chief source of public prosperity.

The love of our country will make us tremblingly alive to her welfare; will produce a deep solicitude when that welfare is in danger or suspense; will make us anxious to know the reasons which exist for hope and fear respecting her, that, if possible, we may multiply those of the former kind, and diminish the latter. The design of the following discourse is to show what ground there is for fear as to the intention of Divine Providence concerning us, and what are the grounds of hope.

I shall faithfully exhibit what appear to me to be sufficient grounds to apprehend that God may yet visit this nation with his righteous displeasure. It would ill become us, even in holier and more prosperous times than those on which we have fallen, to adopt the congratulatory language of Babylon in the day of her prosperity, and the height of her grandeur, "I shall be a lady for ever; I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow." Expectations of undisturbed tranquillity, and uninterrupted prosperity, in such a world as this, resting, as they must do, on ignorance or pride, are often the prelude to a melancholy reverse, the deceptive calm before the tempest. Much less are we warranted to indulge, in our present circumstances, the hope of exemption from national calamity. It is true, we are not engaged in doubtful war with any foreign foe; no alarms of invasion are circulating through the land, and pestilence and famine are at a distance; but are these the only evils which the power of God can employ to scourge

a guilty nation? Can he not find within our own shores ingredients of our curse, and replenishing with them the vials of his wrath, pour them out upon us in a time of external tranquillity? Is not every mind now agitated by fear, and does not every eye seem to view the balance of our destiny trembling in the hand of Omnipotence? And are there not just grounds for such fears?

1. Consider the sovereignty which God exercises in disposing the fortunes both of states and individuals. "He doth his will amongst the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of earth. His kingdom ruleth over all. He taketh up kings, and putteth them down, as it pleaseth him, and gives the kingdom to whomsoever he will." The crowns of the earth, as well as its shields, belong unto the Lord. Impressive and humiliating was his language to ancient Israel: "O house of Israel, cannot I do you with you as the potter, saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel." We depend for everything that constitutes national greatness, prosperity, and happiness, entirely upon the will of God, and (which is still more impressive) we depend for all upon his mercy. We are tenants at will for all we possess. He can depress us without injustice, and while the groans of our humiliation were ascending, ten thousand impartial witnesses would exclaim, "Just and righteous are thy judgments, Lord God Almighty." There is not a single article that we possess over which we can exercise a power so unlimited as that of God over us. Surely such a view of our dependence upon a Being whose power we cannot resist, and whose purposes concerning us are utterly unknown, should excite in us, at all times, a disposition very remote from fearless security.

2. Our national transgressions are sufficient to produce very painful apprehensions. I am aware that declamations against the vices of the times, have been at once practised and despised in every age. It is lamentable that such a topic should be necessary, and still more lamentable that it should be disregarded when it is necessary. It is the last stage in the hardening process of iniquity, when the transgressor either rejects with contempt, or receives with indifference the words of the faithful reprover. May this symptom of a seared conscience be never seen in the case of my countrymen! In speaking of the sins of the nation, I am not going to institute a comparison between the present and any past age of its history, much less between its own moral condition and that of surrounding countries. Comparisons of this kind are seldom resorted to but for the purpose of collecting fuel for our pride, or excuses for our sins. Besides a decision in such cases, where the operation of motive, the measure of light, and the degree of assistance, must be all taken into the account, is a work too difficult for any mind but that which is omniscient. Take the case abstractedly, and say if we are not "a people laden with iniquity, children that are corrupt, a seed of evil doers." "The overflowings of iniquity may well make us afraid." Where shall the eye of the christian observer rest, and there find no cause for confession, grief, and reformation?

Are there no sins written by the very pen of the legislature amidst the records of our laws, upon which the eye of God looks down with displeasure? Is not gambling legalized in the system of lotteries? Is not the sacred institution of the Lord's Supper abused, degraded, profaned, in being converted by the test laws

into a qualification for secular offices? Is not the solemnity of an oath converted into a species of profane swearing, by its repetition on the most trivial occasions, through all the departments of the revenue? Is there nothing in our penal code which needs revision and correction, to render our jurisprudence effective in the prevention as well as punishment of crime? When will the voice of reason and revelation be heard, and the legislature have that "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord," which shall move them with holy indignation to expunge these blots from the statute book?

The sins of the people, and such alone are national sins, require more particular attention. "To consider national sins as merely comprehending the vices of rulers, or the iniquities tolerated by law," says a most eloquent writer,* "is to place the duties of such a season as this in a very invidious and very inadequate light. It is to render them invidious: for upon this principle it is our chief business on such occasions to single out for attack those whom we are commanded to obey, to descant on public abuses, and to hold up to detestation and abhorrence the supposed delinquencies of the government under which we are placed. How far such a conduct tends to promote that broken and contrite heart, which is heaven's best sacrifice, requires no great sagacity to discover. It is, moreover, to exhibit a very inadequate view of the duties of this season, as

* See Mr. Hall's Sermon, entitled "Sentiments proper to the present crisis," preached October 19, 1803, which, in addition to the transcendent eloquence of the peroration, contains so much that is appropriate to the time and circumstances in which we live, that its perusal and circulation cannot be too warmly promoted by every lover of his country.

it confines humiliation and confession to a mere scantling of the sins which pollute a nation."

At the head of our national transgressions, and as the cause of many that will afterwards be enumerated, must be placed a very lamentable disregard of those duties which are binding upon a people placed under the brightest economy of mercy with which God ever blessed a sinful world. If we read the Scriptures, we shall find that the greatest responsibility attaches to that nation to whom "is sent the word of salvation, the glorious gospel of the blessed God." It is the very climax of national privileges "to know the joyful sound." Now does it appear from even a general survey of the people of this country, that they are rendering the knowledge of Christ "a savour of life unto life." Is it not a fact that the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, embodied and expressed in the very appropriate term of "evangelical religion," are by multitudes neglected, by many opposed, and by many ridiculed. By what a large proportion of the community is the whole of religion resolved into a mere compliance with a few ceremonial observances, to the total neglect of the religion of the heart; so that while many do not respect even the forms of godliness, others are satisfied with the mere forms! What a lamentable destitution do we see around us of that religion which begins in deep conviction of sin, intense solicitude about eternal salvation, godly sorrow which worketh repentance, evangelical humility, belief in Christ for justification; and which when so begun, is carried on by the crucifixion of the affections and lusts of the flesh, the subjection of the whole heart and conduct to the law of God, spirituality of mind, the conquest of the world by faith, the predominance

of things unseen and eternal, over things seen and temporal, communion with invisible realities, preparation for celestial glories, closet devotion, family religion, public worship; and which delights in truth, justice, meekness, temperance, brotherly love, does good to all men, and shines as a light in the world! Do we see such religion as this abounding? And what less than this is the religion of the New Testament? Neglect of eternal verities appears to me to be one of the crying sins of our country. Was it not this which procured the death warrant of Judea? She knew not the day of her visitation: and how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

To the neglect of piety we must add the prevalence of immorality. How general is drunkenness, that beastly vice which enslaves the mind to the body, while it consumes the body as in liquid fire! How awful is the thought that the bounties of divine providence should thus be converted into the means of transgressing against their Author, and that the products of nature should be converted into instruments of rebellion against their Creator! Shockingly common is profane swearing! A dreadful taint of impiety runs through the daily intercourse of myriads both of the rich and the poor. It has been frequently said, that in no nation under heaven is the profanation of sacred terms so common as in England. This sin has not even the flimsy excuse of sensual gratification to plead on its behalf, and seems invented for no other purpose than to give expression and effect to the fiend-like passions of enmity, malice, and revenge. It is an impious, though impotent attempt to purloin the fire of incensed justice, to grasp and hurl those thunderbolts of divine vengeance, which ought

never to be contemplated but with dread and trembling. Was female prostitution ever more unblushingly committed, or more widely extended than at this day. What swarms of miserable creatures crawl from their lurking places at the hour of darkness to infest our streets, and spread their toils for their too willing victims. It is computed that London alone contains fifty thousand of these wretched beings, who subsist wholly or in part on the wages of iniquity. "O thou who art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, what a scene of pollution for thee to look upon perpetually, and without a covering!" The crimes cognizable by law committed by this class have quintupled within the last few years.

I come now to the profanation of the sabbath; that day of holy rest, given in mercy to man, at once to refresh his body, worn with toil, and assist his soul in the pursuit of salvation. How are the precious hours of this day squandered upon revelling, business, and travelling! It is probable that in this town, to go no further for an example, not above half the population, who are prevented by no uncontrolable cause, attend the solemnities of public worship. It might be said in reply to this, that there is not sufficient accommodation for the inhabitants. But are all our places of worship crowded to excess? Are our church and meeting wardens in every case wearied with applications for seats and pews? Is it not manifest, that tens of thousands in Birmingham go to no place of worship on the sabbath, merely for want of inclination? With still greater force and propriety this remark will apply to the metropolis, whence myriads are to be seen every sabbath morning issuing through its different avenues for a day's pleasure in the country; who pass the inviting

doors of sanctuary after sanctuary with a contemptuous smile upon those who are hastening to appear before God in Zion. Where there is a demand for accommodation (at least it is so amongst the dissenters), there is generally found generosity sufficient, at any expense, to supply it. It is to be feared that the first day of the week is devoted by a very large portion of the trading part of the community to journies of business, by the rich to journies of pleasure, and by the poor to habits of indolence. Who can help mourning in secret for the routs, parties, and private concerts, which are given in the fashionable circles of high life on that day which is commanded of God to be kept holy? It would be well if many who are loud and long in their declamations against the growth of sedition and impiety, would not in disregarding the sabbath, encourage by their own example the growth of every evil work. I am sorry that the charge of employing the sabbath for the purpose of travelling, may be brought with great justice against many professors of religion. It has become, even amongst them, a very common practice to return home from a journey late on Sunday morning, and to set off on a journey early on the Sunday evening. In the former case the whole day is, in a measure, sacrificed, for after travelling all night the body is not in a state to allow much edification to the mind; and in the latter case, a very valuable portion of the day is lost for purposes of religion. Is any one part of the day less sacred than another? Has not the same authority enjoined all the parts of it to be kept holy? And what an example to the world! I am aware that necessity is sometimes laid upon us in this matter, but it is much oftener made by us. The Christians in Otaheite are

already in this particular the reprovers of the Christians in Great Britain, and we shall soon need a missionary from the South Sea islands to teach us how to observe the sabbath.

There is one mode of showing disrespect to this divine institution, which has very much increased of late years; I mean the sacrifice of it to political discussion. Sunday newspapers are a source of moral and political evil, from which a silent stream of corruption has long been flowing through the land, and which has carried through the medium of ale-houses and political clubs, to ten thousand cottages, principles to which, but for such means, they would have been happy strangers to the present hour. But let us not wonder at these things, while their betters make no scruple of frequenting the public news rooms, or reading the newspapers at home. The practice of the poor is but the copy of a picture which hangs above them. It is useless to tell a poor man that he has no right with a paper on the sabbath; we should show him, by our conduct, that none of us have a right with it on that day. The proper observance of the sabbath is so inseparably connected with public morals and piety, that there is no greater national sin than its profanation; and should it unhappily ever become generally prevalent, we shall see the removal of the last mound that resists the overflowings of ungodliness on the one hand, and the inundations of divine vengeance on the other.

I shall mention one more national iniquity, and that is, a growing departure in our commercial transactions from the principles of strict integrity. Indeed, principle, in a great measure, seems to have departed, while there has come into its place a system of false credit,

of rash and ruinous speculation, of dishonest artifice, and unblushing trickery, till the professed disciples of Jesus are imitating the practices of the basest and most degenerate Jews.

It will be expected, probably, that I should allude to two vices, which, although not national, are committed to a certain extent in the nation. No, brethren, infidelity and sedition never have been, never will be, I trust, the characteristics of Englishmen. Insubordination to the laws and authorities of the realm does exist, I admit, amongst a misguided and deluded party, and must be exceedingly displeasing in the sight of that Great Being who has given his own divine sanction to the authority and arrangements of human government. "The powers that be are ordained of God, and therefore let every soul be subject to the higher powers; and whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."

You will particularly remember that I am not viewing this subject in a political point of view. With politics, in the abstract, I have nothing to do in this place. The pulpit was intended for loftier themes than this. Of course I cannot be supposed to give an opinion whether any, or what alteration is desirable in the state of our parliamentary representation. Certain, however, I am of one thing, that the manner in which this alteration is sought by many,* is in no small degree offensive

* The real or pretended object of these deluded men requires not only the temperate and constitutional vigilance of the government, but the equally temperate and firm resistance of every friend of his country in the private walks of life, and by the operation of individual influence. Let all the power of persuasion, where there is an opportunity of exerting it, be brought to support the exertions of authority.

to God, who is a lover of peace and concord, who delights in a meek and quiet spirit, and has commanded us to "Honour all men, to love the brotherhood, to fear God, and to honour the king."

God does not warrant us to seek even good ends by bad means; and it is perfectly obvious that those means cannot be otherwise than bad which are in direct opposition, not more to the spirit of the British constitution, than to the precepts of divine revelation. Whatever amelioration takes place in the state of our laws, and whenever the moment shall arrive to remove the partial sediment which the stream of time may have deposited at the base of our invaluable constitution, it must be done not by the passions of the multitude, but by the wisdom of the few, lest in clearing away what is extraneous, we weaken the foundation itself.

The partial spread of disaffection is connected with the diffusion of infidel principles. Infidelity, as if it had become mad by its confinement during late years, has broken its chain, and with the fury of an animal infected by hydrophobia, has rushed into society, uttering its howlings, sending horror and consternation before it, and leaving infection and death behind it. Many have been bitten by its fangs, who, in their turn,

Entitled as are the visionary schemes of reform now afloat to ridicule for their folly, and to dread for their consequences, let not their advocates be considered as either below the reach of instruction, or insensible to the force of argument. Conciliatory representation, as we have opportunity in private, may thin the ranks of disaffection, and bring back to the camp of loyalty many who at present appear to have deserted it. The leaders of the system present, I am afraid, a hopeless case. If these men are really sincere in their desires of reform, let them, as the first step towards accomplishing their object, resign the cause to other hands, assured, as they well may be, that in theirs it cannot succeed.

have communicated the contagion to others, till the range of the mischief has reached an extent which we shudder to contemplate. It is at length, we hope, arrested. The multitude are put upon their guard; knowing the dreadful evil that is abroad, they have grasped the weapons of truth, and go armed with the "sword of the Spirit."

Let it not be supposed, however, that all the infidelity in the country is confined to the miserable victim now suffering for his crimes in a jail, or to his followers; it is to be feared that there is no small number of sceptics in the upper and middling classes of society, who conceal their principles under the cloak of a political attachment to religion. To every observing eye the prevalence of infidel sentiments has long been apparent in our periodical literature, our current poetry, our commercial habits, and the state of our social intercourse; not so much in the gross and direct form, which Hume or Paine would have displayed, but in practical irreligion, in systematic contempt of divine revelation, in disregard of religious institutions, in ridicule of true piety, and in the absence of all reference to the Word of God, either as the source of instruction or the standard of character.

Such are a part, and only a part of the sins which lie heavy on our country; and they are attended with peculiar aggravation, on account of the mercies which we have received from the hand of God.

At a period when the public attention is fixed so intently upon our national affliction, and when the general complaint seems to imply a state of almost unmitigated calamity, there appears to me peculiar propriety in bringing forward into view the many mercies

which are still left us, and which, while they aggravate our sins, should moderate our discontent. The temporal comforts arising from our local circumstances are neither few nor small. Our climate is temperate, our soil fertile, our internal resources as to all that constitutes national wealth and comfort, inexhaustible; our insular situation admirable, both for commerce and defence; and the number, natural strength, and genius of our population very considerable. How happily are we preserved from those awful visitations which have so often filled other lands with terror, and transformed the most populous and flourishing districts into the valley of the shadow of death! No volcanoes terrify us with their eruptions, and submerge our towns or cities beneath their streams of lava; no earthquake's convulsive throes bury our population beneath the ruins of their own abodes; no hurricanes carry desolation through our country; famine never whitens our valleys with the bones of the thousands who have perished beneath its reign; no pestilence stalks through our land, hurrying multitudes to the tomb, and filling all that remain with unutterable terrors; war, except in the most mitigated forms, has not been seen within our shores for nearly a century and a half; and although we have been chief agents in the unparalleled scenes of bloodshed and misery which have been exhibited in this quarter of the world during the last five and twenty years, yet have we only sipped of that bitter cup which other countries have drank to its very dregs; and while every country in Europe besides has heard the confused noise of the warrior, and beheld garments rolled in blood, we have only heard reports from afar. Are not our civil privileges still very great? We have a constitution, which,

in theory, is the perfection of political wisdom, and the admiration of the world; and although in practice some abuses may have disfigured its beauty, and the lapse of ages may have impressed upon it here and there the symptoms of decay, it is still, with all its faults, a grand and venerable structure, which, we trust, the rude hand of violence will never be permitted to assail from without, nor the more insidious influence of the prerogative be allowed to endanger from within. How impartially are our laws administered! Are not the life and the property of the peasant as secure as those of the prince? Do we not all repose in equal security beneath the mighty shadow of British jurisprudence? That our judges are the faithful guardians of the rights of all men alike, the events of the present reign, and especially of the last few years, and even months, incontestably demonstrate.

Our spiritual mercies are innumerable and incalculable. How great is the loving kindness of God, which, in this respect, has been manifested through a long succession of ages. How long have we been favoured in this country with the "glorious gospel of the blessed God." Almost as soon as any Gentiles were admitted "to be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ," were the savage and idolatrous inhabitants of Britain called from the sanguinary rites of Druidism, into the church of the living God. The name of the first Christian missionary to our country is lost in obscurity, but it is universally admitted that the true light shone upon this corner of the earth when nations, much nearer to the fountain of illumination, still sat in the darkness of idolatry. When Christianity was eclipsed by the dense Saxon super-

stition, it was again restored, although in diminished purity, by messengers from Rome. In subsequent ages, when the increasing corruptions of popery, like the suffocating clouds which John saw issuing from the bottomless pit, had well nigh extinguished every ray of heavenly light, the morning star of the Reformation arose upon our island in the ministry and writings of the immortal Wickliffe, and this beaming signal of approaching day, was afterwards followed by the noontide splendour of gospel truth. The yoke of the Vatican was torn from the neck of the English church, when many of the nations of the continent remained still in bondage. After a dreadful struggle, in which the friends of truth endured for one hundred and fifty years indescribable sufferings, the most precious of all the birth-rights of an immortal creature was won from the spirit of intolerance, and religious liberty secured by law to the descendants of those heroes, who had died for it in prison, upon the scaffold, and at the stake. It is our distinguished mercy to "sit every man under his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid."

Through the unrestricted enjoyment of this blessing, how have the means of religious instruction been multiplied. What multitudes of holy, faithful, laborious ministers of every denomination, are continually employed in preaching the gospel of salvation, and urging the practice of "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report"! If men neglect salvation it is not for want of monitors; if they go astray it is not for lack of guides; if they sin against God, it is not because there are none to warn them. What a uni-

versal concern is manifested for the instruction of the rising generation! Through the prevalence of Sunday schools, it is now a rare thing to meet with an individual of either sex, under the age of thirty, who is unable to read. Nearly the whole of the children of the poor are every sabbath taken to those institutions, where they are taught to read the Word of God, and conducted to hear it preached. In addition to this, how general is the circulation of the Scriptures! The Bible Society alone has issued since its formation between two and three million copies of the Word of God. The Bible is in the hand of almost every individual. Societies of every possible description have been formed to diffuse religious knowledge into every dark corner of the land. Commentaries upon the Scriptures, treatises in explanation of the doctrines of the gospel, sermons enforcing the duties of revelation, periodical publications, in which appeals have been made, in the form of essays, to the understanding and feelings of the public; religious tracts in every form, and in numbers scarcely to be counted, have all been put into circulation; eloquence, taste, genius, fancy, have all been employed to increase the influence and extend the blessings of religion. What a train of mercies! Where is the country that can be compared with ours for spiritual privileges? It may in a manner be said of Britain as it formerly was of the Jews, "God shows his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel: he hath not dealt so with any nation." And with equal justice may he appeal to us as he did to them, "What more could I have done for my people than I have done?" And yet, after all, what aboundings of iniquity! How unfruitful have we been under all this spiritual culture! To what an extent are

the glorious peculiarities of the christian scheme neglected, denied, and ridiculed! How small is the portion of true christian knowledge in the land, and how much less still the degree of piety! How has iniquity abounded, and the love of many waxed cold! To form a true estimate of our moral condition, we should certainly take all our mercies into the account, and calculate what ought to be the gratitude, the piety, and the zeal of a people so eminently distinguished.

3. As another reason for fear, I mention the view which God has given of his character in the scripture, together with the threatenings which he has denounced against the guilty. His holiness forms a conspicuous feature of his character, as it is delineated on the page of inspiration. Such is his purity, "that the very heavens are said to be unclean in his sight." Sin is the only thing in all the universe which God hates, and this he does abhor wherever he discovers it. With our limited understanding, and feeble powers of moral perception, it is impossible for us to form an adequate idea of the evil of sin, or the light in which it is contemplated by a God whose understanding is infinite, and whose purity is immaculate. That law which men are daily trampling upon, equally without consideration, without reason, and without penitence, is most sacred in his eyes, as the emanation and the transcript of his own holiness. He is also omnipresent and omniscient. There is not a nook or corner of the land from which he is excluded. Of every scene of iniquity he is the constant, though invisible witness. The whole mass of national guilt, with every the minutest particular of it, is ever before his eye. His justice, which consists in giving to all their due, must incline him to punish iniquity, and

his power enables him to do it. He is the moral governor of the nations, and concerned to render his providence subservient to the display of his attributes: and if a people so highly favoured as we are, notwithstanding our manifold sins, escape without chastisement, will not some be ready to question the equity, if not the very exercise of his administration? His threatenings against the wicked are to be found in almost every page of holy writ. "If ye walk contrary to me," said Jehovah to the Jews, "I will walk contrary to you." To the same people he declared at another time, "If ye do wickedly ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king." Nor are the threatenings of the Bible to be viewed in the light of mere unreal terrors, as clouds and storms which the poet's pencil has introduced into the picture; the creatures of his own fancy, and only intended to excite the imagination of others. No, brethren, they are awful realities, intended to operate by their denunciation as a check upon temptation; or if not so regarded, to be endured in their execution as a punishment upon our sins.

4. The example which God has made of other nations, might well alarm us. If kingdoms as such, are ever punished for their sins, it must be in the present world, where alone they exist in their collective form. The solemnities of the day of judgment are intended for mankind in their personal characters. All human associations, families, churches, states, will then be melted down into one general mass of individuals, and every man, amidst surrounding millions, be judged apart. If the rod of the divine anger ever rest upon a collective body, it must be in the present state of things; and the Scripture gives us many examples in which this has

happened. It has preserved an account, either in the way of history or prophecy, of the downfal of nearly all the chief empires, kingdoms, and cities of antiquity; and that, not as a mere chronicle of the event, but as a great moral lesson to the world. It carefully informs us, that sin was the cause of their ruin. It does not leave us to gather this truth by any laborious and doubtful inference, but proclaims that the wars and sieges, the bloodshed and miseries, which ended in their dissolution, are to be regarded by every succeeding age as a fearful exposition of the evil nature of sin, written by the finger of God upon the tablet of the earth's history. Visit, in imagination, my countrymen, the spots where many of these cities once stood, and you shall see nothing but the genius of desolation stalking like a spectre across the plain, lifting its eye to heaven, and exclaiming, amidst the silence that reigns around, "The kingdom and the nation that will not serve thee, shall utterly perish." As you stand in other places amidst the mouldering fragments of departed grandeur, does not every breeze, as it sighs through the ruins, seem to say, as a voice from the sepulchre "See, therefore, and know that it is an evil and a bitter thing to sin against the Lord."

How exactly were God's threatenings accomplished upon the Jews, although they were his chosen people, and the seed of Abraham his friend. Nearly eighteen centuries has the wrath of God blazed upon the mountains of Judea, as a beacon against iniquity; while the tribes that once reposed in honour and peace in her fruitful vallies, are scattered through all lands as living witnesses to the truth of revelation, and living monuments of the terrors of divine justice. And have not the threatenings uttered by the Son of God to John, in

his secluded isle, against the seven churches in Asia, been all executed with an exactness that robs every sinner of his last hope of impunity. Those lamps are all gone out, the candlestick is removed out of its place; those cities themselves, some of them, are abandoned to the foxes and the owls; the Koran is substituted for the Gospel; the Sun of Righteousness has set upon those scenes of apostolic labour, and in its stead the crescent of the Arabian impostor sheds its pale disastrous light. Tell me if Britain does not deserve the most severe of their destinies, if after beholding them go down successively to the dust under the power of iniquity, she take not the warning, and by shunning the cause of their ruin, avert her own.

5. Can we look at the present condition of the country without entertaining the most serious apprehensions? It is no false alarm that is now sounded in our ears; all parties agree that we are in a most critical situation, from which nothing can extricate us but such an interference of providence, as we know not how to describe or to expect. A trade reduced almost to stagnation, a bankrupt list augmenting continually, a declining credit, a load of national debt, and taxation almost overwhelming, yet insufficient to meet the exigencies of the state, an exhausted exchequer, and an administration at a loss how to replenish it, the rapid removal of British capital to be invested in foreign securities, hundreds of thousands of our labouring population only half employed, and consequently reduced to the greatest distress, a restless faction taking advantage of the sorrows of the poor to inflame their resentment, and to direct their passions against the Government, that populous district reaching from the Mersey to the Tweed, in a

state bordering upon insurrection, the Government making encroachments upon our liberty, to defend us from anarchy, the division of opinion that exists both as to the political and financial measures which are necessary for our safety, and, to finish the whole, the expected departure of that venerable monarch, who, in his amiable character preserved a centre of union for the country, and who, though long hidden from our view, has sent from his deep and affecting seclusion, in the remembrance of his virtues, a plastic influence, which insensibly moulded out hearts to loyalty. With such a picture before our eye (and it is not too deeply shaded,) the stoutest heart may tremble, and every one turn an anxious look to the unknown but lowering future.

II. But it is time to seek a source of consolation, and to enquire if there are not some grounds to hope that the Lord will yet arise and have mercy upon Britain. Thank God, there are many bright speeks along the dark horizon to encourage our hopes that the clouds will yet be dispersed, and that we shall be preserved from the gathering storm. So far as secondary causes are concerned, I repose too much confidence in the good sense, loyalty, patriotism of the English people, ever to imagine that they will suffer their invaluable constitution to be violently overthrown by anarchy on the one hand, or gradually undermined by tyranny on the other. I cherish a hope, that should the peace of the world continue, and especially our internal tranquillity be restored, our commercial and financial difficulties will be surmounted, and the tide of our prosperity again flow. But our expectation must be from God, after all. We must not trust in an arm of flesh, but in the living God, "who delighteth in mercy, and does not willingly afflict

the children of men." There are many reasons why we should balance our fears with our hopes, from which I select the following.

1. The long series of deliverances which God has wrought for this country. We have, indeed, ever been the nursling of his Providence: the records of our history are replete with instances of divine interposition on our behalf. In addition to our early emancipation, first, from the yoke of idolatry and afterwards from the dominion of Popery, what deliverances from each have we subsequently experienced! From the Reformation till the Revolution ceaseless efforts were made to rob the country of its most valuable privileges, by civil tyranny on the one hand, and ecclesiastical usurpation on the other. It has become almost obsolete now to talk of the Spanish Armada, and the gunpowder plot, but neither those deep laid schemes against the Protestant religion, nor the equally malignant designs of the Stuart Kings against our civil freedom, should be suffered to sink into oblivion. We deserve all the terrors which these events produced in the minds of our ancestors, if we suffer the memory of them to perish. Let us often go back to that illustrious era, when our merciful God rescued Britain from the slavery to which her infatuated monarch was conducting her, and having banished him as an outcast from the country, gave us in lieu of him that illustrious Prince, who ascended the vacant throne, as with the bill of rights in one hand and the act of toleration in the other. The rebellions of fifteen and forty-five, in favour of the Pretender, are also seldom thought of by us, but they made our forefathers tremble for the safety of all that was dear to them.

To come to our own times, who can forget the alarms

we have passed through since the French Revolution? Never had this country, since the period of the Conquest, such a struggle for her existence as an independent kingdom. An enemy arose whose power at one time seemed almost as boundless as his ambition, while both together were directing their uttermost efforts against us. Like Haman, who accounted all his honours but as nothing while Mordecai was not humbled, he regarded all his conquests with dissatisfaction while England was free. In subjugating the rest of Europe, he seemed to have no other object than to convert it into one immense magazine, from which to collect the materials of our ruin. We saw his progress with dismay, and as he broke the power of one state after another, beheld the evil approaching nearer and nearer to our own coasts. Deliverance, however, at length arrived, and in a way that shewed it to be entirely of God. "He gave snow like wool, he scattered the hoarfrost like ashes, he cast forth his ice like morsels; who can stand before his cold?" He let loose upon our antagonist all the terrors and forces of winter; he made the elements our allies, and poured upon him the hail and the snow which "he had reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war." It was not by human might nor power so much as by the agency of the Lord, that the pride of France was humbled, and our own deliverance effected. "It was the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes." At length, however, the mighty foe was completely subdued by the instrumentality of that kingdom which he had so often threatened to annihilate, and he was encaged on the rock of St. Helena, and left to be the prey of his own reflections, like Prometheus beneath the beak of the vulture.

Now although we cannot peremptorily conclude from what God has done that he will continue to do the same, especially as we so little deserve it, yet may we imitate the conduct of the Psalmist, and in the midst of our straits "remember the years of the right hand of the Most High." Instances of past deliverance illustrate the power and mercy of Jehovah, and encourage us to trust in both. How often were the Israelites directed to strengthen their confidence in the Lord, by looking back upon all the way in which he had led them through the wilderness; and to prove by fresh acts of affiance, that his arm was not shortened, nor his ear become heavy. The first duty we owe to God upon receiving a favour, is to be grateful; the next, to deduce from it a motive to trust him for the future. The pious suggestion of an Israelitish female, may probably be applied, without presumption, to our case as a nation: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things."

2. The number of true Christians in the land is a pleasing and strong ground of hope. Amidst the aboundings of iniquity, thank God, we discover no small degree of genuine piety. Probably there is not upon the surface of the globe a spot, where, within the same limits, so many are to be found whom "the grace that bringeth salvation hath taught to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world." By referring to the Scriptures, we learn this important sentiment, that God often confers favours upon the guilty for the sake of the righteous. In some cases divine judgments would have been altogether averted from a people, had there been amongst them but a

small number of the friends of God. He would have spared Sodom for the sake of ten righteous, and said in after ages to Jeremiah, "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it." Sometimes God's wrath has been deferred for the sake of the righteous. There was to be peace in Hezekiah's days, though dreadful times were to follow. Josiah was promised that he should go down to the grave in tranquillity, and not see the evil which was then to come upon Judea. The vengeance of the Most High is not unfrequently mitigated, and shortened in its duration, on account of the godly. "For the elect's sake," said Christ, in alluding to times of great tribulation, "those days shall be shortened." In one case we find a country delivered from the horrors of invasion, and the dread of impending subjugation, out of respect to a saint that had been dead almost three centuries. "For I will defend this city to save it," said Jehovah, when Jerusalem was threatened by the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, "for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake." Temporal favours have been conferred on some persons out of pure regard to the holy individuals with whom they were connected. Laban was prospered because Jacob was in his service, "and the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake." And in how many instances have spiritual blessings been retained in cities, towns, and villages, on account of those who had sufficient piety to value and enjoy them. When Paul would have departed from Corinth, he was detained there by a revelation from God to this effect, "I have

much people in this city." These are instances sufficient to establish the truth of the general principle, that the wicked are often blessed for the sake of the righteous, and to warrant a belief that if we could scrutinize the secrets of the divine government, we should be astonished to discover what an extensive influence the friends of heaven have possessed in the arrangements of providence and the destinies of nations. Nor is it difficult to assign the reasons on which this procedure is founded. Is it not a public testimony borne by Jehovah of his love for his people and his approbation of their principles? Nothing is more common amongst men than to confer a favour upon a stranger, or an enemy, on account of a friend; nor do we feel any thing to be a stronger token of respect, than a kindness shown to another on our account. On this principle does the Lord act in reference to the righteous; they are the children of his adoption, and the favourites of his heart, at whose request, and on whose behalf, he will sometimes bestow his favours upon others. It is thus also that he honours prayer. "I sought for a man among them," said he to Ezekiel, "that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it." The righteous answer the description which is here given, and come up to the requisition of the Lord. They stand in the gap, through which his judgments are coming in upon the land, and surround their country with a hedge of prayers. They take the public calamities with them into the closet of private devotion, and make them in the seasons of holy seclusion the matter of their fervent supplication at the throne of grace; and as many a river which carries fertility and wealth through a land,

is to be traced to a spring bubbling up in the concealed recesses of some thick embowering wood, or in the hidden cleft of some overshadowing rock, so are many of the streams of national blessings to be found issuing from the retirement where the Christian wrestles with his God. The Scripture assures us that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." There seems to be a very strong belief in the minds of men in general, that the saints have "power with God," and considerable interest in the court of heaven. Hence when the wicked are in circumstances of distress, and especially when death stares them in the face, they are most anxious to enjoy the prayers of the godly; Pharoah entreated for those of Moses, and Simon Magus for the intercession of Peter. A good bishop once told a monarch, who was complaining of an individual who had fallen into disfavour for his plain dealing, "that he had not a better subject in his dominions, since that man could have what he wished of God for asking."

The righteous have great influence on the destiny of a nation, by opposing and restricting that iniquity which brings the judgments of God upon the land. As it is the sin of a people which lays them open to wrath, they that would keep off vengeance must keep out sin. Who are the people that hinder sin most? The righteous. They reprove it by their testimony, they discountenance it by their example, they repress it by their authority. Every holy man is an impediment to the universal prevalence of iniquity. As the tide of depravity approaches him, carrying desolation along with it, he in effect says to it, "thus far shalt thou go and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." And, in addition to personal holiness, he avails himself of every scriptural

and rational means for the suppression of vice and error. And while the righteous, by doing every thing to suppress iniquity, are lessening the causes of the divine displeasure against a land, they at the same time increase the objects, and strengthen the grounds of his regard, by the propagation of true religion. Vital godliness, like every other living thing, contains a principle of dissemination, and its possessor never more perfectly exhibits or enjoys its influence than when actuated by the philanthropic desire of extending its benefits to others. A zealous concern for the glory of God, and the best interests of his fellow-creatures, prompts him to avail himself of every suitable opportunity to enlarge the dominion and increase the subjects of true religion. By this means he multiplies in the nation those who are the friends and favourites of God, and goes on raising up others around him whose praises and piety are continually ascending in clouds of incense to heaven, and returning again upon the land "in showers of blessings."

There is yet another reason why the righteous have such influence in bringing down favours upon others, and that is, to keep up an analogy between the order of providence and the doctrine of grace. It is the peculiar and identifying principle of the economy of grace to confer benefits upon the guilty for the sake of the righteous. Has not God "made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him? By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." What is the salvation of the sinner, upon

the gospel plan, but bestowing eternal life upon the ungodly for the sake of him who was altogether holy? What unbounded glory and honour will it confer upon our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord, when the saints shall be seen at the last day casting their crowns at his feet, acknowledging with transports of gratitude, that it was for his sake they were all bestowed. Is it not then a striking analogy, that as spiritual and eternal benefits are conferred upon sinners for the sake of Christ, so the saints are honoured in the arrangements of Divine providence, to have temporal benefits bestowed for their sake upon the world. With this view of the important and beneficial influence diffused by the saints over the interests of the countries in which they dwell, and at the same time remembering how great is their number in this land, I cannot but indulge a pleasing hope in the Divine mercy, that we shall yet be spared from those calamities which existing circumstances and the public apprehension might otherwise lead us to expect.

3. The great moral change which God is employing us to effect in the world, is another ground of hope. Work done for God seldom goes unrewarded. "He is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love." In alluding to the act of Phinehas in slaying Zimri and Cosbi, we find him using the following language: "Phinehas hath turned away my wrath from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed them not." We are also informed that upon Joshua's zeal in the detection and execution of Achan, "the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger." There is but little doubt that Josiah's piety in reforming religion and destroying idolatry, wherewith the land was so generally overspread, had considerable influence in

keeping off the judgments of the Lord during his life. The Scripture has gone even further than this, by informing us that the service of a heathen prince, in executing the judgments of the Lord upon his enemies, although he was actuated by no other motive than his own ambition, did not pass unobserved or unrewarded by the Almighty. "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus; every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he served against it. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he shall take her multitudes, and take her spoil, and take her prey, and it shall be wages for his army, because they wrought for me saith the Lord." Public acts of zeal then for God's glory and service, rendered to him in the way of accomplishing his purposes, appear to be peculiarly acceptable in the sight of God, and often bring down his blessing not only on those by whom they are performed, but also on others connected with them. The wicked are sometimes spared to assist the righteous in carrying on this work, as the Gibeonites were reserved to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, for the use of the congregation. That part of the apocalyptic visions is often realised, in which the earth was seen to help the woman. Many who are totally destitute of real religion may render essential service to the great work of propagating it in the world. Seldom has a more wicked man appeared than Henry the Eighth, yet he was the instrument of the reformation. Cyrus, a heathen, let go the captives of the Lord, to build the city and the temple. Darius, Artaxerxes, and Ahasuerus

countenanced and supported Daniel, Nehemiah, and Mordecai, in their pious and zealous efforts.

England has long been an asylum to which, from all lands, the feet of the oppressed have directed their course for protection, and to which the imploring eye of misery has been turned from almost every scene of human wretchedness. But she is not only the benefactress of the nations, she sustains a still higher, more sacred, and more important character, for she is their evangelist also. When Jehovah placed her upon her rocky seat in the middle of the ocean, and sent commerce to pour its treasures into her lap, and permitted her to take the East and the West for a possession, and made her to be feared through all the earth, and gave the arts and the sciences to be her attendants, and religious and civil liberty to be the children of her adoption, and put the Bible into her hand, it was with this most impressive admonition, "For this cause have I raised thee up to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be my salvation to the ends of the earth." In some measure faithful to her calling, she is at this moment bearing the torch of truth, kindled at the fountain of celestial illumination, into "the dark places of the earth:" sending heralds of mercy to "the habitations of cruelty;" rending "the vail of the covering cast over all nations," and preparing for the famishing tribes of the earth "the feast of fat things in the mountain of the Lord." By her Sunday schools she is enlightening the minds and reforming the manners of the lower classes at home; by her Bible societies she is aiding the same benevolent design, and at the same time awakening the slumbering churches of Europe, and sending the precious Word of God to the very ends of the earth; and by her missionary institu-

tions she is turning the heathen nations "from dumb idols to serve the living and the true God." The successful efforts made at the present moment by British Christians of every evangelical denomination, to diffuse the light of Christianity over the face of the globe, find no parallel in the history of our religion, since its first ages. Nor are these operations at all suspended or diminished by the difficulties of the times. The funds of the different religious societies were never greater. In this season of our depression, when the winds and the waves seem no longer as formerly almost exclusively employed to bring us wealth; when our fleets are in the docks, instead of transporting our manufactures to every foreign port; when the murmur of distress succeeds to the busy hum of activity; when the weaver sits down to look with desponding eye upon the loom, in which the shuttle used to fly to the notes of his joy; now, is our country sharing with idolaters, the income of her poverty, and employing her diminished resources to extend the influence and the benefits of her faith. The missionary spirit is the guardian angel, the tutelary genius of our nation, and preserves a most auspicious token, to which the pious turn a hopeful eye; and as they view it, "thank God, and take courage." Not that these efforts prefer any claims upon God, in the way of merit, but they seem to interpret his dispensations, and disclose his designs.

I shall now enumerate the duties incumbent upon us, which are to be deduced from this subject, as appropriate to our situation.

1. Let us devoutly acknowledge both the source and the justice of our calamities. It is true, that in every case of calamity which admits of the operation of second

causes, it is our duty to look at these with a scrutinising eye, since the origin of the evils that afflict us is often to be found in the sins which disgrace us, and the very removal of our distresses depends, under God, upon ourselves. "An attempt to develope the more hidden causes which influence the destiny of nations, is an exercise of the mental powers more noble than almost any other, inasmuch as it embraces the widest field, and grasps a chain whose links are the most numerous, complicated, and subtle." But when we have arrived at these, let us by no means suppose that this supersedes the necessity of acknowledging the interposition of the Supreme Governor; for, admitting that the calamities of a nation are the natural consequences of certain movements in the body politic, effects which follow causes in the way of established connexion, yet still the question may be asked, were not the original movements, the primary causes themselves, appointed by God, in order that we should feel the consequences and effects which follow? Whether it be the long state of warfare in which we were engaged, or the transition from war to peace, or the excess of machinery, or certain financial arrangements, or all these together, that have produced our present distress, in the way of secondary causes, let us not forget to look up to that great Being by whom all inferior and dependent causes are arranged to accomplish his purposes either of mercy or of vengeance. His rod is not the less to be acknowledged, because our own follies sometimes furnish its materials. There is nothing he more obviously intends by his judgments, than to produce a deep impression of his own dominion. Let us then take care not to bring upon ourselves the woe which is denounced against

those "who regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hands." Let us, when surveying, feeling and deploring the distresses of the times, not omit to realise in these things the chastening hand of the Lord. And while we do this, let us confess the justice of his dealings. Let us consider our great and manifold transgressions against him. "Thou, for our sins, art justly displeased," is the language that best suits us.

2. We should learn from this subject to form a right estimate of the powerful influence exerted by moral causes over the destiny and prosperity of nations. We have already considered the order of the divine government, in bestowing favours upon some occasions, for the sake of the righteous; but, in addition to this, righteousness itself has a natural tendency to promote the interests of a nation. In the theories and speculations which are always afloat as to the causes of the prosperity or decline of empires, far too little account is made of those of a moral kind. Forms of government, codes of laws, systems of jurisprudence, the state of the arts and sciences, commercial, financial, and political regulations, have each their own appropriate operation; but there is another source of influence, less obvious, though not less powerful than these, and upon which they all depend for much of their efficacy, I mean the state of christian virtue. The wisest institutions of human policy can do but little for a people amongst whom is wanting that degree of principle which is necessary to secure for them a right direction and a proper result. The prevalence of vice, in a country blessed in other respects with every advantage for being great and happy, is like the corrosion of an inward cancer upon one of the finest

human forms, placed in a healthy situation, and possessing all the sources of wealth and greatness; in spite of every external advantage, and while the hectic spreads its deceptive loveliness upon the countenance, the principles of decay are in continual operation. The prevalence of sin impairs the interests of a nation in innumerable ways; it circulates disease in the life's blood of the state through every part of the system, from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot. It diminishes the revenue on one hand or misapplies it upon the other; it withers the genius, enervates the strength, paralyses the industry, and dissipates the wealth of the population; it destroys mutual confidence, removes the only guarantees for the right direction of the public energies and the public institutions; in short, it extinguishes all those principles of honesty, justice, truth, sobriety, and subordination, which are the germs of national prosperity, and encourages the growth of a class of feelings which shed poisonous influences around them.

A country where christian principle is at a low ebb cannot be a happy nation, and cannot, for any long series of years, be a great one. Had the Roman empire possessed even the partial and defective virtues of the Republic, it would have resisted the attacks of the northern barbarians, whose successive hosts would have been defeated by the old Roman valour and patriotism, as Pyrrhus, Hannibal, and the Gauls had been before them. Instances from modern history might be cited, in which, when the most auspicious events presented themselves to benefit a people, they had not virtue sufficient to secure a happy result, but converted the very means that would have blessed them into a source of the heaviest curses.

An English prelate, in a work which does honour to the human intellect, has most clearly proved the natural tendency of national virtue not only to prosperity, but to power. "Could we,*" he observes, "suppose a kingdom or society of men upon the earth universally virtuous for a long succession of ages, it is easy to conceive what would be its internal situation, and what the general influence which such a community would have in the world by way of example, and the reverence that would be paid it. It would plainly be superior to all others, and the nations must gradually come under its dominion; not by means of lawless violence, but partly by what would be allowed to be a just conquest, and partly by other kingdoms submitting themselves voluntarily to it, and seeking its protection one after another in successive exigencies."

Instead, therefore, of having our attention absorbed in the contemplation of the political causes of national prosperity and adversity, let us look with more intense regard to those of a moral and spiritual kind. Let every friend of his country, according to the measure of his ability, and in the most direct line of his influence, labour to consolidate the strength of our empire by the powerful cement of religious principle. Amidst improvements in agriculture and commerce, in arts and manufactures, in jurisprudence and finance, let us recollect that without an increase of true scriptural rectitude there is nothing solid, nothing lasting. Whatsoever may increase, if at the same time infidelity and irreligion increase with it, it is but the expansion of a bubble, which, the more it is inflated, approaches the more rapidly to the moment of its dissolution.

* Vide Butler's Analogy, Part I, Chap. 3.

3. Personal repentance and reformation are eminently appropriate to the present season. We have seen that it is sin, under the influence of which the interests of a nation wither and die, like a tree that has been smitten with the blast of heaven. There can be little hope for us in the mercy of God, except "the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and we forsake every one his evil way, and the violence that is in his hands, and cry mightily unto him, and who then can tell but that God will turn and repent, and turn away his fierce anger from us." As national wickedness is made up of the sins of individuals, let it be lessened by individual penitence and reformation. Let each one of us, for himself, say, "In what way am I contributing to the general stock of guilt? What is there in my conduct that tends to make God angry with the country? Wherein do I accumulate divine vengeance upon the land?" Let us not merge our individuality in the throng. It is most vain and hypocritical to lament the general depravity, while our own particular transgressions escape our notice. Such general lamentations are too often resorted to as an easy composition for the severer duty of personal repentance. Who is there living in habits of drunkenness, of profane swearing, of sabbath-breaking, of uncleanness, of falsehood, of neglecting the great salvation; these are the persons who, while they are bringing upon the land, as it were, "hailstones and coals of fire," "are kindling for themselves a fire which shall burn to the lowest hell." Let them consider their awful situation, hastening from sinning to dying, from death to judgment, from judgment to the bottomless pit, and then from age to age of torment without end or mitigation. What is any

political alteration, any parliamentary reform, to such persons, or to any of us, compared with that spiritual change which is absolutely necessary to, and inseparably connected with eternal salvation. O, if only a small portion of the time and feeling that is given to questions which in a few years must cease to interest us, were devoted to those matters of everlasting importance which a million ages hence will be as dear to us as at this moment, it would be far happier both for ourselves and for our country. By all the value of the immortal soul, and all the dread importance of eternity; by the joys of heaven on the one hand, and the torments of perdition on the other; by all that is rapturous in the smile of God, and all that is tormenting in his frown, I entreat you, my brethren, to concentrate your chief desires and most vigorous pursuits on that change of heart and conduct, which is necessary to the possession of eternal life. In addition to the greater importance of personal and spiritual reform, over every other kind, it has this advantage, that it is more within our reach. Our efforts to reform others may be unsuccessful; we cannot command their judgments, nor turn their hearts; but by the help of God, no sincere and fervent effort shall be in vain, which is directed to the improvement of our own character, and the attainment of our own salvation. In this sense let each one seek to reform one, and thus while promoting those interests which shall flourish when the earth and all the countries that are therein shall be burnt up, we shall most effectually advance the present welfare of the land, and we shall open to ourselves one refuge to which we may repair under every personal, domestic, or national calamity,

and which will not fail us at last amidst "the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds."

4. Importunate prayer for the divine favour will commend itself to all but atheists, as peculiarly seasonable in the present juncture of our affairs. If God be the ruler of the nations, let him have the honour due unto his name. Without neglecting a single means that human wisdom can devise for lessening the difficulties which exist, let us repair sincerely, and fervently, and generally to the source of illumination, and the fountain of grace. Amidst the innumerable expedients which one and another is suggesting, let a minister of the true God propose, that whatever else be adopted, the duty of prayer should be performed with fresh ardour. Have we any right, or any reason, to expect the divine blessing, except it be solicited. Let something by all parties be spared from invective, something from accusation, something from discussion, and given to prayer. It may be affirmed that those who rail most, pray the least. If any prayers prevail it will be those of the righteous. Let them, therefore, diligently employ themselves in this holy exercise. How great will be their joy should their supplications succeed, and if not, they will have the comfort to reflect that they did all that was in their power to avert the judgments of the Almighty, so that in either case their prayers will bring peace to their own bosoms. Especially let us pray for those who are at the helm of affairs, that in this time of storm and peril they may have wisdom given them to steer the national bark into still water, and bring her safely to an anchor, without casting overboard any of those precious rights and privileges with

which she is so richly freighted. Let us intercede that they may be permitted to adopt no measure which shall exasperate where we should charitably hope it is their intention to heal. And if there are any who have little confidence in the existing administration, there is the more need for them to pray to God, whose wisdom can confound the mightiest, as it can assist the weakest minds.*

5. Let us exercise a scriptural and constitutional submission to the just authorities and laws of the realm. "There is, in my apprehension," says Mr. Hall, "a respect due to civil governors, on account of their office, which we are not permitted to violate, even when we are under the necessity of blaming their measures. When the apostle Paul was betrayed into an intemperate expression of anger against the Jewish high priest, from an ignorance of the station he occupied, he was no sooner informed of this than he apologised, and quoted a precept of the Mosaic law, which says, 'Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.' In agreement with which the New Testament subjoins to the duty of fearing God, that of honouring the king, and frequently and emphatically inculcates submission to civil rulers, not so much from a fear of their power as from a respect for their office. Apart from the personal characters of rulers, which are fluctuating and variable, you will find the Apostles continually en-

* A public prayer meeting, in which seven congregations unite, is held once a month in Birmingham, for the state of the nation. Instead of an address, which it would be difficult so to frame as to avoid all cause of offence, each minister reads a portion of Scripture before he prays.

join a respect to government, as government, as a permanent ordinance of God, susceptible of various modifications from human wisdom, but essential, under some form or other, to the existence of society. The wisdom of resting the duty of submission on this ground is obvious. The possession of office forms a plain and palpable distinction, liable to no objection or dispute. Personal merits, on the contrary, are easily contested, so that if the obligation of obedience were founded on these, it would have no kind of force, nor retain any sort of hold on the conscience; the bonds of social order might be dissolved by an epigram or a song. The more liberal sentiments of respect for institutions being destroyed, nothing would remain to ensure tranquillity but the servile fear of men. In the absence of those sentiments, as the mildest exertions of authority would be felt an injury, authority would soon cease to be mild; and princes would have no alternative but that of governing their subjects with the severe jealousy of a master over slaves impatient of revolt: so narrow is the boundary which separates a licentious freedom from a ferocious tyranny. We shall do well to guard against any system which would withdraw the duties we owe to our rulers and to society, from the jurisdiction of conscience. Let the general duty of submission to civil authority, therefore, be engraven on our hearts, wrought into the very habit of our mind, and made a part of our elementary morality." Not that from any thing here said, I would restrict the constitutional right of the people freely to discuss the measures of Government. "The privilege of censuring these with decency and moderation, is essential to a free constitution; a privilege which can

never lose its value in the eyes of the public till it is licentiously abused. The temperate exercise of this privilege is a most useful restraint on those errors and excesses, to which the possession of power supplies a temptation. The free expression of the public voice is capable of overawing those who have nothing besides to apprehend, and the tribunal of public opinion is one, whose decisions it is not easy for men in the most elevated stations to despise. While, therefore, we maintain the privilege with jealous care, let us be equally careful not to abuse it."

6. We should be zealously active in the support of every proper measure for disseminating the principles of divine truth. If the foul spirit of infidelity be abroad, let the friends of revelation follow her through all her dark and winding ways, opposing energy to energy, and contrivance to contrivance. Her element is darkness, her food is iniquity. Let us endeavour by every possible means to pour a blaze of scripture light upon the land, and reform the vices which exist, and she will then retire like the wild beast of the forest from the light of heaven, to starve and perish in her den. Let those who profess to believe in the truth of Christianity, and especially such as make a stricter profession than others, be more careful than ever to exhibit in their conduct the purity, the benevolence, the meekness, and humility of the gospel. Let every one embody in his own character the internal evidence of Christianity, and prove that it is from heaven, by showing that it makes him heavenly. The sublimity, purity, and benevolence of its morality have ever been considered as the superscription of deity upon the gospel; let these be drawn out in living characters in our temper and conduct.

Infidelity is generated in the corruptions of inconsistent Christians, and fed from the same source.* Who can wonder at its late prevalence in France, when the only view of Christianity which was there exhibited to the world, was in the form of lying jesuits, lazy monks, haughty ecclesiastics, and a population who thought to atone for every vice by a few prayers in a language they did not understand, or a few acts of obeisance to a gilded or a painted image! We need not be surprised that the sarcasms of Voltaire should have been employed against the New Testament when this was all he saw of its influence. A corrupt religion is the parent of infidelity, and it is no marvel if such a daughter rise up to the destruction of such a mother; or that in her mad fury she direct her efforts against the holy being, whose name the hypocrite had borrowed and belied. Infidels find it much easier to attack Christianity through the inconsistencies of its professed believers, than to make their advances direct against itself. It is much readier to sneer at hypocrisy than to disprove the reality of miracles. This is as unfair a method of proceeding as to impute to British jurisprudence the crimes tried at the Old Bailey, or to the British Constitution the seditious practices of rebels. It is useless, however, to plead the unfairness of the proceeding, and the only way to meet it is to determine, that as infidels will judge of Christi-

* A holy and venerable friend of mine in the North being in London, felt his compassion moved to call upon Carlile before his trial, to reason and expostulate with him, and to deliver to him the warning voice. The blasphemer listened with calm and patient attention to the messenger of God, and on my friend's retiring said to him, "Sir, if all the professed disciples of Jesus were such Christians as you, I and my party should very probably have thought differently of Christianity."

anity by the conduct of its professors, they shall see in them a fair, and full, and faithful exhibition of its influence. Let us go on with the moral education of the children of the labouring classes. I say the moral education, for depend upon it we mistake if we suppose it is enough merely to teach them to read and write. There is nothing in such a system to operate as with the power of a talisman, in the transformation of character. In addition to this, it is principle, principle that is wanted. Let all our Sunday schools become what they ought to be, what it was originally intended they should be, and what many of them are, a scene of moral cultivation, where the vast wilderness of mind which is found in the lower classes shall be broken up, and by being sown with right principles, shall become as the garden of the Lord, and yield in rich abundance the fruits of righteousness, peace, and order. If we merely teach them to read and write, we only plough and harrow the soil, and then leave it for the enemy to sow with tares, or raise upon it a crop of poisonous weeds. Let our Sunday school teachers labour to the uttermost to produce devout impression, to implant religious conviction, to form the character to habits of piety, order and loyalty. And let the respectable, and well educated, and senior parts of the community, come forward and lend a helping hand to this great work. We have the next generation of the labouring population at the present moment under our care, in the form of children and in the character of pupils, and if we let slip the opportunity, we shall deserve indeed to suffer for our folly. Let us be doubly zealous in the circulation of the Holy Scriptures. The word of God is a moral sun, whose flood of radiance poured upon those lower and

baser flames, presumptuously kindled by a spark from the bottomless pit to outshine his splendour and supply his place, will ultimately extinguish them all. Thank God for such an institution as the Bible Society, which was never more necessary nor more seasonable than at the present day, and which is encircling the moral interests of the poor with a barrier more unscaleable to the enemies of revelation, than the great wall of China is to the wandering Tartars of the desert. Let this mighty defence be kept up with unsparing expense and labour, and let every Christian who has a shilling to give, feel himself put in requisition to assist the work. I can easily conceive with what rage and despair the genius of scepticism must look up at this impassable barrier, while scowling along its base she "counts the towers, and marks well the bulwarks thereof."

Let us renew our efforts in the cause of Christian missions. Such efforts, while they destroy idolatry abroad, and bring down the blessing of God upon our country, are perpetuating, by their success, the evidence of Christianity arising from its prevalence. The religion of Jesus is the only system of theology that ever supplanted another by the mere power of persuasion. And this it did; it dissolved the colossal edifice of ancient idolatry with the spell of words, and laid prostrate in the dust, by the mere force of truth, systems dear to the taste, the prejudices, and the pride of millions; thus proving that the conversion of the heathen world was the act of the same omnipotence which brought the earth from chaos. Now as we employ the same means, our success, so far as it goes, is a continuance of this species of proof. Every converted Brahmin, Tahitan, and Hottentot, is a beam of evidence shining upon the

gospel, which has thus become the power of God to his salvation. We may send the deist to the once polluted groves of Tahiti, where cannibalism, murder, and promiscuous fornication were so lately committed without shame, and without remorse, and after he has surveyed the change which Christianity has produced, bid him do so with his enchantments, if he can.

Be zealous then, my countrymen, for the Lord God of Hosts. Gratitude, justice, duty, all demand it of you; and if these are not sufficient, I plead one other motive, interest requires it. When the claims of the Almighty are generally, devoutly, practically acknowledged, then will the scales of our national destiny vacillate no longer, but settle into quiescence, and preponderate on the side of our salvation; then may Britain repose her hopes on the mercy of God, and cherish the high expectation that she shall be preserved a great and happy nation till she sink with honour in the conflagration of the universe.

After this volume was nearly all printed the Editor became possessed of the second edition of this sermon, and was surprised to find that the Author, contrary to his usual practice, had in part re-written it. It became necessary, therefore, to reprint the whole except the first few pages, which contained only one additional paragraph. That occurs in the second page of the sermon, immediately after the sentence ending with "his peculiar and infinite regard," and is in the following words:—

"These pious dispositions should be constantly exercised in relation to our spiritual interests. We should keep up a holy reverence for God's majesty, and an humble delight in his mercy; a trembling dread of displeasure against sin, and a cheerful hope of pardon through the mediation of Christ; a salutary fear lest we should fall into temptation, and a lively confidence in God's grace to deliver us from it; a deep solicitude lest we should come short of eternal glory, attended with a tranquil expectation that we shall be 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'".

CHRISTIAN MERCY EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

A SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE NEW CHAPEL IN THE POULTRY,

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 21ST, 1820,

FOR THE

BENEFIT OF THE CITY OF LONDON LYING-IN INSTITUTION.

"The wisdom that descendeth from above is full of mercy and good fruits."

Matthew v, 7.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

The beatitudes with which our Lord commences his incomparable Sermon on the Mount, were intended to correct the errors which the Jews entertained as to the nature of his kingdom; and to exhibit to the world the leading features of the religion which he came to promulgate. Mistaking the spirit of prophecy, and interpreting literally the imagery by which, in the glowing style of Oriental composition, the writers of the Old Testament had described the person, reign, and success of Messiah, the Jews expected a mighty general, who at the head of victorious armies, should break the Roman yoke from their necks, and raise their nation into the proud pre-eminence of universal empire. If such expectations had been well-founded, it is evident that lofty ambition, martial courage, indignant contempt of others, unrelenting severity, and insatiable resentment would have been the prominent virtues of the disciple of Christ; and the followers of the Lamb would, with the exception of their name, have symbolized in everything with the adherents of the imperial eagle. The dispositions which I have just enumerated, formed, in fact, the popular

characters of the age in which our Lord appeared, both amongst Jews and Gentiles. And indeed the hero has been a far greater favourite than the saint with the historian of every age and every country. The mild and passive virtues have few admirers, compared with those which appear invested with the dazzling splendour of state policy, restless ambition, and military prowess.

But the kingdom of Christ is not of this world; a remark which will strictly apply to his subjects; and to delineate their character as well as to describe their blessedness, was the design of the beautiful exordium of the discourse with which he opened his public ministry. And this is the delineation. Instead of that proud consciousness of superiority which both the Jews and Gentiles, with different views entertained, the disciples of Christ would be characterised by a deep sense of their wants and imperfections, and the most unfeigned humility: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Instead of being gay, thoughtless and volatile, addicted to scenes of festivity and noisy mirth, they would be serious, thoughtful, and penitent: "Blessed are they that mourn." Instead of entertaining that high sense of personal dignity, which is quick to receive offence, and hasty to resent it, they would meekly bear injuries, and rather forgive than revenge them: "Blessed are the meek." Instead of an insatiable thirst after conquest, they would ardently covet the victory over their own lusts and corruptions: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Instead of delighting in the horrors of war, in order to gather the ensanguined laurel from the field of battle, they would be infinitely better pleased to sympathize with the sorrows of mankind, and relieve them: "Blessed are the merciful." Instead of seeking

their happiness in luxurious or sensual gratifications they would find it in the growth of inward purity: "Blessed are the pure in heart." Instead of fomenting and delighting in hostility, either domestic, social or national, they would sacrifice everything but principle, to restore concord where it has been unfortunately lost, and to maintain it where it is possessed: "Blessed are the peacemakers." Instead of coveting the gale of popular applause, by sacrificing their convictions to the smiles of the world, they would endure its bitterest wrath rather than apostatize from the faith; and esteem themselves more happy in securing the crown of martyrdom than a high place in the verses of the poet, or the declamations of the orator: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake." Such is Christianity, as its Author has described and blessed it. Such is the model after which every christian character ought to be formed. How far short of this we fall, I blush to think. It is high time we should return to first principles, and begin, as for the first time, to enquire in what true practical religion really consists. From this assemblage of holy graces I select for our present consideration the most useful of them all. My subject this evening is, Christian Mercy; in the discussion of which, I shall explain its nature, direct to its objects, enumerate its properties, unfold its reward, and urge its practice.

I. I shall explain the nature of Christian Mercy. Mercy may be defined to be that benevolent sorrow which we feel at perceiving the sufferings or approaching calamities of others, connected with a desire to relieve them. The object of mercy is simple misery, not according to some ethical writers as the effect of guilt, but as

misery, without considering the cause which has produced it.

1. I said it is that benevolent sorrow which we feel at perceiving the sufferings or approaching calamities of others. Without such a compassionate disposition a man cannot be merciful. He may be liberal in the distribution of his wealth, but this may arise from ostentation, or may be an operation of self-righteousness. To the possession of the amiable and useful virtue of which I am now treating, a tender sympathizing heart is indispensably necessary. There must be a cord in the bosom vibrating to every note of woe, and where this exists in connection with a desire to relieve, there is mercy, though the means of relief are not possessed. One may be destitute of it, while lavishing thousands; another may possess it in high perfection, and yet not have a farthing to bestow. It begins in sympathy, although it does not end there. It is in the heart that mercy erects her throne; it is thence she issues her commands, and dispenses her favours: the senses and the members are her servants; the gold and the silver are her means; but she never leaves the heart: for when she has left that she has departed from the character.

2. I said that mercy is always connected with a desire to relieve misery, and that this desire will always prompt to vigorous exertion. Right dispositions wherever they prevail in the heart, will always appear by their appropriate effects in the conduct. Dr. Hartley concisely defines compassion "to be that uneasiness which a man feels at sight of the misery of another," and mercy, if not synonymous with compassion, is so near akin to it, as to admit of a very similar definition. If the misery of another renders us uneasy, a regard to our

own peace will make us either anxious to relieve it, or to avoid the sight of it; the latter is the case with the man who merely feels the sorrows of others, but has no genuine compassion; the former is the conduct of the merciful. Mercy is a passion, but it leads to action. It is not a mere operation of sentimentalism, which sighs and weeps, yet does nothing more; like that of Sterne, which led him to shed tears on the sufferings of an expiring animal, but permitted him to leave his own mother in a state bordering on starvation. I feel for you, is a common reply to the tale of the sufferer; but unless that feeling be so far excited as to grant relief, it is not compassion. St. James by an admirable association of ideas, has told us that the wisdom which cometh from above is full of mercy and good fruits: evidently teaching us that this tender and interesting grace is never seen in its right character, but when in a state of fructification. And what are its fruits? Kind words? Benignant looks? Tears of pity? No. These are its blossoms, but substantial acts of kindness are the fruits which the hand of misery is invited to pluck from this heavenly plant for its own relief. We must renounce our claims to the character on which the beatitude of the text is pronounced, unless there be a desire, and that desire be followed by vigorous exertion, to relieve the misery which has excited our sympathy. A person of mild and benignant manners, soft and compassionate language, who by this fair exterior awakens the hope of the wretched, but after all confines his bounty to words and looks, resembles the fig tree, which the Saviour cursed, because it was covered with delusive foliage, yet was destitute of fruit to satisfy the hungry.

II. I shall enumerate the properties of Christian mercy.

1. It is supported and directed by the principles of the New Testament, and not merely by the force of natural feeling. It will be remembered that I am now speaking of Christian mercy, or, in other words, of that compassion which is represented in the Word of God, as the work of the Divine Spirit, which supposes the previous existence of the Christian character, and which is urged by considerations peculiar to the gospel. The renewed mind of a believer is represented, in the figurative language of the Scripture, as the garden of the Lord; and all the holy virtues of sanctification as the fruits and flowers which, by a heavenly agency, have been planted in it. Between these and the natural virtues of the unrenewed heart there is a considerable resemblance, as there is between the wild productions of nature and plants of the same species when removed to the garden, and placed beneath care and skill. I admit there is much mercy, much amiable compassion, shedding their fragrance and yielding their fruits in the wilderness of corrupt nature; refreshing the weary by the former, and by the latter satisfying the wants of the hungry. We have sometimes the melancholy spectacle to see a man whom a whole village or a town unites to bless, because he has been eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and a father to the poor, and has fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and healed the sick, and caused the widow's heart to sing for joy; to see such a man—because he has not erected his mercy seat, like that in the temple, upon the Rock of God's choice—swept away with the refuse of the earth, and the wreck of nations that know not God. I pretend not to determine what effect natural loveliness of disposition without religion may have in

lessening the torments of hell, but if there be any truth in the Scripture, it will not elevate to the joys of heaven. A deist, or an atheist, may be of a merciful disposition, but will this save him? One feels a reluctance in applying the denunciatory parts of revealed truth to men, who, though they are apparently destitute of all real religion, possess every thing else that can adorn humanity, and render them the blessing of their species; and yet when so many are perpetually told, and so readily believe the assertion, that charity is a passport to the skies, it would be cruel if those who know the reality and consequences of the delusion, were to be silent, and not to declare that the most amiable and diffusive benevolence, if unaccompanied by the essentials of true religion, will leave a man after all within the flood mark of divine vengeance, where he will be swallowed up by its approaching tide. St. Paul expressly declares "that though a man give all his goods to feed the poor, and have not charity," or "love," that is, love to God, leading to a proper regard of our fellow-creatures, he is nothing. Many have deluded themselves on this subject by the dreadful perversion of a passage of inspired truth, which utters a sentiment the most remote from that which it has been made to promulgate. "Charity," say these persons, "shall cover the multitude of sins." Now, by charity, here, is meant love; and the sentiment contained in the expression is nothing more than that love will conceal with a friendly covering, instead of publishing to the world, a multitude of imperfections in those we regard. This is its true meaning. Taken in the acceptation of the persons who are weighing their alms-deeds against their crimes, it would justify all the vile and horrid hypocrisy of the darkest age of popery,

when to build a church or found a monastery was declared by lying priests to the worn out murderer or adulterer, to be a sufficient expiation for all the crimes of the most impure or bloody life; for if lesser acts of benevolence will cover lesser sins, there are no vices so flagrant which may not be covered on this principle, by an increase of munificence.

Let it not be said, that it is of no consequence upon what principle a merciful act is performed, provided the compassion is felt, and the relief communicated. I admit that in relation to the object of our mercy, and the interests of society with regard to him, this remark is correct. In reference to these, it is no matter what was the motive which dictated the act; whether the doer of it had the glory of God in view, or whether he was an infidel. But our actions sustain other relations, which make it of infinite and eternal moment under what motives, and upon what principles, they are performed. The question is, what influence our conduct will have, not upon the comfort of others, but upon our own eternal destiny; not what may be demanded by our fellow-creatures, whose most penetrating discrimination cannot reach the heart, but what may be and is required by that Omniscient Being, to whom the very soul, with all its most secret contents, is an open and legible page. In short, the question is not what constitutes worldly morality, but what is essential to pure evangelical religion.

We go on to observe, then, that true Christian mercy, that which will be accepted in the sight of God, and receive his smile; that which will ensure his gracious and unmerited reward, and which will have no slight connexion with our celestial happiness, is exercised

in designed obedience to God's command, in express imitation of his conduct, and with an earnest desire to promote his glory. This is the ground on which it is enjoined: "Be ye merciful, as your Father who is in heaven is merciful." This disposition is cherished by a devout contemplation of that mercy which shines from heaven upon the human race through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. With other men, mercy is merely a feeling; with the Christian it is a principle. By them, it is exercised in gratification of their inclination; by him, at the dictate of conscience. They think it is kind for one needy creature to compassionate another; in addition to the force of this sentiment, he argues, that if God has so far pitied him as to deliver his soul from eternal misery, the least spark of gratitude must lead him to relieve the wants of his fellow-creatures. They go no higher than to gratify their own propensities; he desires to honour God. They expect, by deeds of mercy, to merit eternal life; but he depends, amidst the most profuse benevolence, upon the righteousness of Christ.

2. Christian mercy displays tenderness of manner in her acts of liberality. It is akin to that charity which is kind, and resembles that goodness of our heavenly Father, which "gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." There are many ways of communicating relief to the wretched, but this lovely virtue will choose that which will least oppress the feelings of its object. It will act the part of the tender surgeon, who, in healing the wounds of his patient, will inflict no unnecessary pain. A rough and churlish man, whatever may be his skill, is unfit for the chamber of pain and sickness. Mercy needs a quick, discerning eye, a gentle hand, a tender heart; many of its objects must be dealt

with delicately. It is a feminine virtue, and should partake of the softness and mildness of the sex. There should be nothing in our manner unnecessarily to wound the feelings of those whose miseries we wish to relieve; no upbraiding should accompany our beneficence; what we communicate should not appear to be extorted from a reluctant hand; it should not be like the spark smitten from a flint; nor like water squeezed from a sponge; but it should drop like balm upon the wounded spirit of the sufferer. The smallest relief will in every case be doubly sweet when administered with kindness, while the most substantial benevolence, tossed in petulance to the miserable, may aggravate the suffering which it is intended to mitigate. Like Him, who has left us an example, that we should follow his steps, we should be careful not "to break the bruised reed."

3. Christian mercy, to the greatest tenderness of feeling, adds the greatest courage in action. There are some who would be thought to possess too much compassion to endure the sight of human woe. They fly the scenes of wretchedness, and never venture down into the dark and gloomy abodes where misery dwells in all its loathsome and repulsive forms. At such sights, their senses are offended, their feelings are shocked, their comforts are interrupted, and they resolve to expose themselves no more to the trial. But this sickly sensibility deserves no higher character than selfishness in disguise, or cowardice, varnished with the tears of mock compassion. What would the miserable do if there were no other pity than this in the world, and no other benefactors than these to be found? Many of the forms of human wretchedness are of the most disgusting, and others of the most shocking nature; and every person

of feeling would, on every ground but the hope of communicating relief, preserve the greatest distance from them. But mercy, like the physician, consults not her pleasure, but the calls of duty; and bracing up her nerves, and fortifying herself with motives, and kindling all her courage, flies to the scene of want and suffering. Would you see this virtue in all its sublimity and grandeur, go, not to the study of the sentimentalist, where, weeping over the tale of unreal sorrows, in fancied tenderness of his heart, he hides himself from all the sights and sounds of actual woe, and whence he occasionally sends abroad his alms, without daring to trust himself amidst the living forms of grief; but follow the philanthropist from his home, the resort of plenty, luxury, and elegance, and trace him along the dirty and narrow alley, where the poorest of the poor herd together, amidst want, and wretchedness, and vice; where there is everything to offend every sense, and some new shape of misery or spectre of want crosses his path at every step; where sounds which seem the wailings and blasphemies of the damned, at every step, come across his ear; see this herald of mercy, trembling, yet pressing onward, through all these horrors, to reach a hovel in the centre of this earthly hell, where, amidst filth, and want, and disease, lies gasping a human being, to whom he is anxious to convey the comforts of one world, and the hopes of another. This is mercy! Behold the man, whose memory will never perish till the milk of kindness in the bosom of our species be transvenomed into the gall of asps, and whose name will be heard with transports on the banks of every river in Europe, until those rivers shall forget to flow, the immortal Howard, pacing backward and forward over our quarter of the globe in

search of misery, diving into the depths of dungeons, plunging into the infection of hospitals, surveying every building in which society inflicts or hides away sorrow and pain. This is mercy. Behold that heroine of our own days, who, urged by the mighty impulses of her own brave heart, in opposition to kind advice, and as it seemed at first with neglect of prudence, but as we see now, under the protection of God, whose messenger she was, ventured within the walls of Newgate, where, in addition to all that could offend the eye, the ear, the touch, the smell, there was everything to shock the moral sense; see this astonishing woman, descending from splendour to place herself amidst scenes of living, crawling filth, and leaving for a season the pure and quiet endearments of her home, to collect around her a band of furies, maddened at once by disease and vice; and all this for the simple purpose of reforming creatures considered by society beyond any hope, and below every effort for their improvement. This is mercy. Go, ye soft and sentimental benefactors of the human race, who can weep for wretchedness, but cannot bear to see it; go, look at these sublime and interesting characters, and learn what mercy is.

4. To judicious discrimination between true and false misery, Christian mercy unites a propensity to relieve all misery, on its own account. We certainly ought not to suffer ourselves to be easily imposed upon by "that cunning craftiness which lieth in wait to deceive." An indiscriminate liberality supplies a stimulus to vice, is a bonus upon fraud, and afterwards, when deception has been frequently detected, by a powerful reaction it overturns the very throne of mercy itself: for no one is more likely to have his heart steeled against all appeals

to his compassion than he who, after a long course of benevolence, discovers that his pity has been often wasted upon pretended distress. But while this discrimination is exercised, there should be a disposition to relieve to the extent of our ability all real misery. We can easily conceive, for it is a case of frequent occurrence, that misery may in some instances be attended by circumstances that give it a deep interest, and invest it with a charm of peculiar and resistless fascination. Even the churl, the miser, and the cruel oppressor, have bowed at the feet of afflicted beauty, and suffered themselves for once to be led captive in the fetters of mercy. There is a romantic kind of pity in the world, which silly tales, falling in with mawkish sensibility, have helped to produce and cherish: I mean that disposition which is ever seeking after what it considers interesting objects of compassion. Misery, exhibited naked and alone, as it may be found in every street and every day, has no power to set in motion this spurious passion. The cries of hunger, the groans of sickness, the plaint of woe, return unheeded in sad echoes upon the sufferer's heart, unless the child of romance can discover some incidents "to give to affliction a grace," and which might serve as the basis of some striking and pathetic tale. I call this the mercy, not of the heart, but of the imagination; the compassion of the novelist, of the poet, of the painter, but not of the Christian. It should be recollected that there may be the most deep and entire wretchedness, without either youth, or beauty, or rapid vicissitude, or complicated plot, in the case. It is but seldom that we shall meet with instances of woe so varied and interesting in their details as to form a picture for the pages of a story. If we wait for such

scenes to awaken our compassion, the world will die around us, and we shall die in the midst of it, before we have hushed a groan, or wiped away a tear.

5. Christian mercy should be characterised by diligence. It is said of our Lord, that "he ever went about doing good;" and the history of his life proves the truth of the assertion. Whether in the crowded city, or the retired village; whether in the domestic circle, or the courts of the temple; whether he led the multitude into the wilderness, or met them amidst the social haunts of men, he was ever engaged in acts of compassion, both to the souls and bodies of mankind. His errand to our world was a commission of mercy, and all his actions here an uninterrupted display of pity. We are to find our model in Him who never slept in the cause of human happiness. Diligence characterises the efforts of the enemies of the human race, and it should surely not be wanting in its friends. The powers of darkness, with an energy of which we can form no adequate conception, are perpetually scattering the seeds of human misery, and causing the thorn, the bramble, and the nettle, to grow with rank luxuriance in the path of life. We must oppose energy to energy, and diligence to diligence. The objects of our pity are every hour passing in crowds, above the need, or below the reach, of our efforts; rising to heaven, where misery never enters, or sinking to hell, where mercy is never seen. Sin and disease, accidents and injustice, misfortune and death, are every moment busily employed, in extending the range and the reign of misery; and surely mercy should not be tardy or lukewarm. Our compassion should not be fretful or capricious, to-day all ardour, to-morrow all languor, but stedfast, immoveable, always

abounding. Whatsoever our hand findeth to do, we should do it with our might.

6. Christian mercy should be attended with self-denial. We are not to offer on her altar the halt, the blind, and the lame, the mere offal of our comforts, which we deem below our notice; nor are we to be content with yielding up the surplus of our possessions, which we do not want, and cannot use. We must stand prepared to make sacrifices and endure hardships. It is shocking to think how little some persons will do to relieve the miseries of others. If they can supply the wants of the needy, and alleviate the woes of the afflicted, without going a step out of their way, abridging themselves of a single comfort, or giving up a moment's ease, they feel probably no objection to do a generous act; but if they must endure the least fatigue, or sacrifice what is in any degree valuable to themselves, tears may flow in torrents, and groans may rise in dismal concert, before they can be excited to deeds of mercy. They will not abridge one of all their luxurious gratifications, although the prunings of almost any of them would be enough to guard the cottage of a poor neighbour from the worst terrors of poverty. Did the Son of God exhibit a species of compassion which cost him nothing? Did he, without effort and without humiliation, give us the surplus of his riches, the redundance of his glory? Did he only speak from the throne of his majesty, or despatch a company of angelic forms from the countless host ministering around his feet, to bring us tidings of mercy, expressions of his good will? Altogether the opposite. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might

become rich." The measure of his self-denial was the difference between his throne of glory and his cross. Can that man, who will not make the smallest sacrifice in mercy's cause, persuade himself that he is a disciple of this merciful, self-denying Redeemer?

7. Christian mercy is not discouraged by the ingratitude or the opposition which may be manifested by those whom it relieves. That man has calculated too highly upon human virtue who believes that benevolence will always be rewarded by the gratitude of those whose wants are supplied, and whose sorrows are mitigated, by its exertions. It is too common a fault of our species, first to mistake, and then to forget, their benefactors. Mercy is not always received with the promptitude with which it is offered. Some are too proud to be dependent, and turn with scorn from the hand that would lift them into comfort; others sullenly receive the assistance as their due, and stoop not to thank the generosity to which they are indebted. It is not thus with all. Tears of gratitude often repay the philanthropist with a reward, compared with which the gems of India are but as dust. If, however, we would do good, we must do it looking only to the smile of conscience and of God for our remuneration. It is delightful to behold want and care, and disease and sorrow, disappearing before us in the path of mercy, although we may see ingratitude filling their place. We have still the comfort of reflecting, that notwithstanding we have done our duty, and the sum of human wretchedness is less. In this respect, also, we may be instructed by the history of our divine Saviour. He flew to our world on the wings of mercy, he was himself incarnate love, truth dwelt on his lips, compassion reigned in his heart; wherever he

directed his course the miseries of multitudes vanished before the miracles of his grace, and salvation followed his footsteps. He was the teacher who instructed their minds, the benefactor who satisfied their hunger, the physician who healed their disorders, the deliverer who would have saved their souls; yet, for all this, he was maligned, calumniated, hated, persecuted, murdered. And shall we expect to find the path of benevolence like one of the walks of paradise, where the serpent was harmless beneath the flowers? If we do, we shall soon discover our mistake.

III. I go on to consider the objects of Christian Mercy. And I am sure no one will accuse me of degrading the subject, if, for a few moments, I urge the claims of that large portion of the animate creation to which Providence has denied the power of pleading its own cause. Oh! there is a depth of cowardice, cruelty, and injustice in inflicting misery upon an unconscious brute, deprived of all means of resistance and all power of complaint, except by its quivering flesh and screaming cries, for which language is too feeble to furnish execrations sufficiently emphatic. Let me never fall into the hands, or be at the mercy of that man, who, whatever may be his pretensions or his character, would wantonly inflict a pang on the least and lowest insect in the scale of life. Man is, or ought to be, the guardian of the rights of the irrational creation; but, lest he should be unfaithful to his trust, the great God has interposed his authority, and raised a wanton injury of any of his creatures into a crime against their Almighty Creator. Remember, then, that "a merciful man is merciful to his beast."

But the chief object of Mercy, is man.

1. With regard to his temporal wants and woes. Innumerable are "the ills which flesh is heir to" in this vale of tears. Poverty, sickness, hunger, nakedness, care, all, like roots of bitterness, spring up along the road which conducts us to the grave; and all, the merciful man, to the utmost of his power, will endeavour to repress or eradicate. He will not hide himself from such sorrows. His own comforts will remind him of the necessities of others. A sense of the woes by which he is surrounded will reach him at the centre of that wide circle of plenty within which he dwells, and will not allow him to enjoy what Providence has given him, till, with no scanty hand, he has administered to their relief. He will remember that others are men of like passions with himself, and that if with so many comforts to sweeten the cup of life, he so often tastes the wormwood and the gall, their portion must be wretched indeed, to whom, but for the aid of mercy, the draught must be unmingled bitterness.

It has been adopted as a maxim by some good, but mistaken people, that as "the children of the world" devote all their charity to the temporal wants of mankind, "the children of light" should exclusively employ theirs for the spiritual interests of the human race. This appears to me a most erroneous sentiment, and highly derogatory to the honour of religion. We are "to let our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify God, our heavenly Father." One way of exhibiting the splendour of this holy light, is by excelling in those virtues, the excellences of which are perceived, and the obligations of which are felt by the people of the world. Zeal for the diffusion of the gospel is, by many, considered only as a meteor of enthusiasm,

but mercy is acknowledged by all to be a necessary christian virtue. Besides, our motives will be mistaken if we abandon the temporal miseries of mankind; for men will be at a loss to conceive how they can have mercy for the soul, who appear to have none for the body; and how they can feel compassion for strangers whom they have not seen, who are destitute of it towards their neighbours whom they have seen. In the absence of mercy for the temporal miseries of mankind, all our solicitude for their spiritual interests will be resolved into disgusting hypocrisy, which, under pretence of compassion, is carrying on the purposes of mere sectarianism. The advocate of Missionary and Bible Societies should be foremost in the work of clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and healing the sick. The conduct of our Redeemer is an admirable model in this respect. His identifying character is the Saviour of souls; but how diligent he was in relieving temporal wants, let the history of his life declare.

2. Christian Mercy extends its regard to the spiritual miseries of mankind. The man who believes the Gospel sees the whole human race in a state of sin and ruin; suffering all the consequences of transgression in this world, and exposed to the bitter pains of eternal death in the world to come. He is convinced that without a meetness for the pure and spiritual joys of heaven, not an individual of all the millions who are continually passing into eternity, can ascend to the realms of glory and felicity. They appear, in his eyes, to be actually perishing, and hence he is filled with the tenderest concern, and affected with the deepest sorrow. In his estimation, the most agonizing diseases, the most pinching poverty, the greatest embarrassment, and the heaviest

cares, are as nothing, compared with those miseries which sin has brought upon the deathless soul. With all the compassion which he feels for the body, he cannot forget, that if it were not relieved, the grave would soon terminate its woes; but that the soul, if not saved, would become immortal in its wants and wretchedness. This makes him not only willing, but anxious to support every scheme, which has for its object to extend the light of divine truth to those who sit in darkness and the region of the shadow of death. Often he surveys, from his own happy elevation on the hill of Sion, the countless millions that crowd the realms of Paganism and Islamism, till his heart yearning with compassion, dictates to his tongue the prayer of the Psalmist, "God be merciful unto us and bless us, that thy way may be known on earth, thy saving health among all nations." Nor is he content with expressing his mercy by prayers. He cannot withhold his property, while every breeze and every wave that touches upon our shore wafts to it from the dark places of the earth that heart-rending petition, "Come over and help us."

Yes, mercy to the soul is the soul of mercy. This is its sublimest, its mightiest effort. It supplies wants and alleviates woes which would otherwise be eternal. A missionary society, or a Bible society, is the highest exhibition of benevolence that can be witnessed below the skies. Its provisions and issues will be everlasting, and the grandeur of its results be seen infinite ages after the hospital, the dispensary, and the alms-house shall have sent forth their last stream of healing. Mercy to the soul raises its subject into the nearest resemblance of Jehovah; it is, in fact, "to have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." The human

spirit seems to occupy the centre of the divine government, around which the plans and purposes of Deity are perpetually revolving, and the chief end of all the mighty movements is to glorify God in the salvation of man. Who, then, would exclude the soul from the sphere of his compassion? Let us not forget to do good in relieving the temporal wants of our fellow-creatures, but in the exercise of a still holier and loftier ambition, let us aim at the honour of saving the soul. An infinitely richer and more lasting renown will follow such an achievement than the civic crown awarded by the Roman Senate to him who saved the life of a citizen on the field of battle.

IV. Let us now dwell upon the benedictions with which mercy stands connected. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." If we considered this language as meaning no more than that the compassionate should, in their necessities, be the objects of pity to their fellow-creatures, we should assert no more than experience proves to be true. Who is so likely to receive the kind and merciful attentions of others, as he who in the days of his prosperity was a fountain of comfort to them? The public will hasten to such a man in the time of his distress, and attempt to discharge the obligations which he had conferred by his liberality. The tide of mercy which had flowed from his heart will return to him again, convincing him that "in such measure as we mete, it shall be measured to us again." When we consider the vicissitudes of this changing world, and think how speedily we may be reduced to the circumstances of those who now depend for relief upon our benevolence, we surely ought to find in such a reflection no feeble inducement to the exercise

of mercy. Never can the denial of pity affect the sufferer's heart with such exquisitely painful emotions, as when it seems to come in the way of severe, but righteous retribution, and reminds him of the hour when he closed his ear to the tale of another's woe.

But the text has a higher meaning, and expresses a far richer and more comprehensive beatitude than this. They who shew mercy to others upon Christian principles, shall themselves obtain mercy from God. Here it will be necessary for me to state a distinction which is something more than merely a difference in words; I mean the distinction between the meritorious cause of a blessing, and an indispensable prerequisite to its possession. Any one who has favours to distribute, may require as a sine qua non from every one who would enjoy them, the performance of a condition which could in no sense be considered as a meritorious cause of the desired favour, because not at all equivalent to it. In this sense, a merciful disposition to our fellow-creatures is the stipulated condition* of our obtaining mercy from God; a prerequisite, but not the cause. It is not that for the sake of which we obtain mercy, but without which it will be denied us. It bears the same relation to eternal happiness as holiness does (of which it is,

* The author feels great pleasure in quoting the sentiments of Mr. Hall on this subject, as most clearly expressing his own: "When the term conditions of salvation, or words of similar import, are employed, he wishes it once for all to be understood that he utterly disclaims the notion of meritorious conditions, and that he intends by that term only what is necessary in the established order of means, a sine qua non, that without which another thing cannot take place. When thus defined, to deny there are conditions of salvation, is not to approach to antinomianism merely, it is to fall into the gulph. It is nothing less than a repeal of all the sanctions of revelation, of all the principles of moral government. Let the idea of con-

indeed, a part); "without which no man shall see the Lord." The very mode of expression here employed utterly precludes the idea of pity to our fellow-creatures being the meritorious cause of the divine favour. It is said they shall obtain mercy, which would be a most inappropriate term in the case of merit. That mercy which God exercises towards man, essentially includes the idea of guilt on the part of the latter. It is the compassion, not merely of the benefactor towards simple misery, but of a ruler towards that wretchedness which is the consequence of crime. Hence, when it is said, we shall obtain mercy, the possibility of merit is excluded. Merit appeals not to mercy, but to equity. If it is admitted that we have all deserved death by our sins, it is confessed that none of us can become entitled to life by any part of our conduct, since it is impossible for the same being to merit both punishment and pardon; indeed, the very idea of our meriting pardon is an absurdity. No; if any sinner be saved, it must be by grace through faith. The most diffusive compassion, united with the most exemplary charity, forms no ground on which a transgressor can rest his hope of pardoning mercy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" is the language of the gospel.

ditional salvation, in the sense already explained, be steadily rejected along with the term, and the patrons of the worst of heresies will have nothing further to demand. That repentance, faith, and their fruits in a holy life, supposing life to be continued, are essential prerequisites to eternal happiness, is a doctrine inscribed as with a sunbeam in every page of revelation; and shall we, in deference to the propagators of an epidemic pestilence, be doomed to express by obscure and feeble circumlocutions, a truth which one word will convey?"—See Hall's "Essential Difference between Christian Baptism and John's Baptism," p. 66.

This faith, however, produces suitable fruits, and one of its inseparable effects is a merciful disposition. Without this there can be no genuine belief of the gospel; where this exists, and compassion is exercised in obedience to the divine law, in conformity to the divine example, and with a view to the divine glory, there shall the promise of the text be fulfilled; God will blot out the transgressions of such a man, restore him to his favour, pity him in all his distresses, and finally cause his miseries to issue in that state where "he will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Without mercy to others we have no more reason to expect it from God, than we have to hope for an entrance into heaven without that holiness which is its only preparative; while, on the other hand, in proportion as this disposition prevails in the heart, we have at least one evidence of having obtained mercy. But by the aid of what rhetoric, sophistry, or delusion which the deceitfulness of the human heart may supply, can that man persuade himself that he has received grace from God, who knows, if he know anything of himself, that pity is a stranger to his character? A want of mercy is a no less damning mark upon the soul than a want of purity or justice. Let such an unfeeling creature tremble, for he is hastening to take his station before a throne where he shall find judgment, but no mercy.

I shall now, in conclusion, urge the cultivation and the practice of this most amiable and useful disposition. 1. Let us consider how much need there is of mercy from the amount of misery which exists in the world.

By a figure of speech, which is by no means too strong, our present state of existence is said to be a "vale of tears," in which "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." From the hour when our first parents ate the forbidden fruit, they and their offspring have possessed in sad perfection the knowledge of evil. The deep groan with which the great bard represents nature to have marked the perpetration of that awful deed, has been so protracted and so echoed, that it may be justly said, "the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now." The world is full of misery of one kind and another. Poverty, sickness, disease, care, disappointment, and innumerable other causes of distress, are perpetually at work in destroying the comforts of mankind, and embittering the cup of human life. Could we from some upper region in the air, with powers of vision strengthened for the task, look down upon every scene of suffering but in one populous town; could we penetrate into every chamber of sickness, every hovel of poverty, every scene of dreadful foreboding, heart-withering care, and deep despondency; could we see at one glance every widow, every orphan, every fatherless babe, and all the tears they shed at the remembrance of their loss; could we behold all the ignorance and vice to be found within this limit, and the souls there perishing in sin; could all the sounds of woe which, from only such a portion of our race are perpetually rising, to expire unheeded by man on the gales of heaven, enter at once into our ear, surely, surely we should descend from our elevation determined "to sell all our goods and give to the poor." But though we see it not, a mass of misery does exist in that space of which we can form no adequate idea.

We look upon the outside show of human life as the attendants at a theatre do upon a comedy, where the brilliant lights, the picturesque scenes, the seeming gaiety of the performers, exclude all ideas of sadness; to form an accurate idea of the real condition of the actors, we should follow them to the miserable garrets where they are hourly struggling with want and care, where, throwing aside the characters assumed for the hour, and losing the smiles put on for the occasion, we should find them most forlorn and miserable. So if we go behind the scenes of this life's drama, we shall find an inner world of distress, which meets not the eye in public. And can we remain cold and unfeeling, inactive and illiberal, amidst universal misery? Shall we give ourselves up to luxurious enjoyment, while the groans of creation are heard all around us? Shall the plaint of human woe be but as the serenade of our selfish gratification? Shall the tear fall perpetually with less power of impression on our spirits than the dropping of water upon a rock? Shall human cries move us less than the sighing of the wind does the mountain oak? Let us all become philanthropists upon a scale proportioned to our circumstances. Let us all be actuated by a noble, merciful ambition to leave the world holier and happier than we found it. There is much for us all to do, and after we have all done our uttermost, much will remain undone.

2. Remember how much you have it in your power to alleviate human misery. Most men underrate their means of doing good. Few are aware of the full extent of their ability to bless their species. It may be safely affirmed that there is not one rational being so sunk in poverty, or so circumscribed in influence, as to be de-

prived of all opportunity of diminishing the sum of human wretchedness. It is to be apprehended that a mistake on this subject prevents many from exerting themselves as they should do in the cause of humanity. They suppose that philanthropy requires, in every case, a large capital of wealth, influence, and talent. Nothing is more erroneous. It is true the larger the stock of those things is which a man possesses, the more good he can do; but to imagine that we must be either rich, or great, or learned, in order to be a blessing to others, is a mistake which robs us of much pleasure, and society of much assistance. Let there be only the assiduous cultivation of a merciful temper, coupled with a determination to exercise it to the uttermost, and it is astonishing to find how many channels will open through which to pour the streams of benevolence. If we have not property of our own, we may be able to exert our influence over those who have it; and we may become the almoners of those who have no leisure or inclination to distribute their own benefactions.

Each of us should enquire in what particular way he can be most useful to the interests and comforts of his species. Our situation and circumstances vary so much, that the same schemes of usefulness do not adapt themselves with equal facility to all. We should study our temper, fortune, talents, and neighbourhood, with a view to ascertain whether there is in either of these any peculiarity which seems to mark us out more for one sphere of action than another; and it should never be forgotten by those who have large means of usefulness, that exertion is binding on them in exact proportion to the extent of their ability.

The responsibility attaching to wealth seems to be

but imperfectly understood after all that has been said or written on the subject. It should ever be borne in mind that the exercise of mercy and charity is represented by our Lord in his description of the judgment day, as one of the principal topics of scrutiny in that season of final retribution. What a spectacle of horror and amazement will the rich man then present, who lavished in selfish extravagance that princely fortune which was entrusted to him for the benefit of society. Let such men read the parable of Dives and Lazarus; its salutary and impressive warnings were delivered expressly for them. Wealth considered as a means of sensual gratification, ranks but one step above the acorns of the swine; while as a means of relieving misery, it opens sources of felicity, lofty and sublime as the joy of angels. It is a transporting picture which the fancy presents to the soul, by pourtraying what the world would be if every rich man were a benefactor; if all our wealthy tradesmen, gentry, and nobility, were to employ a suitable proportion of their property in lessening human misery, and increasing human happiness. But long, we fear, it will be before such a picture will be realised.

3. Let us consider the happiness attending upon a merciful spirit. Duty and interest are in every case inseparably connected, but never more obviously than in this. Of mercy may be strictly said, what is affirmed of piety in general, "her commands are not grievous, but joyous, and in keeping of them there is great reward." It is true that a sympathising spirit, in some measure, makes the sorrows of others its own, but its tears, like a shower in summer, produce a refreshing atmosphere, and are far more pleasant than that cold

stiffness and frosty hardness which prevail in the bosom of the unmerciful man. Think with what emotions Howard must have reposed on his pillow, after a day spent in carrying the cup of mercy into dungeons, as in his dreams he still beheld the captives quaffing the delicious draught. Think what must have been the sublime bliss of the liberator of Africa, on that solemnly delightful evening, when, after smiting for twenty years on the fetters of slavery, he saw them yield at last to his toilsome and patient exertions; and to the vision which had so often in imploring attitude exclaimed, "Come over and help us," he could at length reply, "Thy chains are broken; Africa be free." And even in lesser instances of mercy, there is a luxury which holy generous minds alone can know, and with which all the gratifications of vanity and the pleasures of sense cannot be brought into comparison. God is the happiest of beings, because he is the most benevolent. It is expressly said, that "he delighteth in mercy." We can form no idea of the manner in which the Deity is suseeptible of pleasure; it is enough for us to know, that in whatever manner this delight is experienced, it arises from the exercise of mercy; and surely if it administers pleasure to him that sits on the throne, it might be expected to afford some of the purest bliss that mortals know on earth.

Let any man be able to appropriate to himself the language of Job, already alluded to in a former part of this discourse, and his bosom will be conscious of a bliss which a seraph must almost feel inclined to envy: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and

him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out."

4. Remember your own dependence on Divine mercy, both for all the comforts of this life, and all the blessings of the life which is to come. It is, indeed, an impressive consideration, eminently calculated on the one hand to encourage our hopes, but certainly on the other to awaken our alarm, that we are all most entirely at the mercy of God. Having sinned against his law we have forfeited our souls to his justice, and depend for happiness on that grace which he is under no other obligation to exercise, than that which he has imposed upon himself, by his own promise. If we are ever saved at all, it must be by an act of goodness still more unmerited than that which we should perform, were we to bestow a favour upon the man who had done his uttermost to injure us. God could utterly destroy us, and from the very ruins of our eternal interests, raise a monument to the praise of his justice. The smoke of our torment ascending up for ever and ever, would cast no reflection upon the equity of his proceeding, or throw any shadow upon the perfection of his administration. "God be merciful to me a sinner," is the humble petition which best suits our character in every approach to his throne. Upon that mercy we are every hour living. It is this which keeps us from dropping into the pit, whence there is no redemption; this which gives us every comfort we enjoy on earth; this which opens to us the prospect of eternal glory.

And shall we, who owe everything we possess, everything we hope for, to the unmerited grace of God, deny the exercise of mercy to our fellow-creatures? Shall we, who must perish eternally, unless God be full of compassion towards us, be wanting in pity towards those who are in any measure dependent for their comfort on us? Where is the heart that can resist the force of these considerations? Let us yield ourselves up to their influence, and convince the world that the wisdom which descendeth from above, is indeed what the Scriptures declare it to be, "full of mercy and good fruits."

I have now only to connect my discourse with the particular object for which it is delivered. I have the honour to plead this evening on behalf of the City of London Lying-in Institution. Such an Institution must speak for itself to every feeling heart, and speak in accents to which eloquence, did I possess it, could add no power whatever. This charity is designed to mitigate, as far as human aid can do it, the sufferings of a season, which, with singular emphasis and propriety, is denominated "woman's hour of sorrow." A wise and righteous Providence has seen fit to visit with peculiar agony that sex, which introduced transgression to the world; thus raising up, even in the midst of our dearest social comforts, a lasting memorial of the fall, and an impressive comment on the evil nature of sin. But although God has thus severely visited the mothers of mankind, he has not placed them in these awful moments beyond the legitimate exercise of our tenderest compassion. If there be one season above all others in the history of female sufferings, which prefers a stronger, larger claim upon our interest, it is then, when in the act of giving life, she exposes her own. It is an hour formidable to

all. It is a season of deep solicitude even in those families, where every assistance and every comfort that wealth can purchase, can be easily obtained. Think, then, what it must be in the chamber of poverty, where no mitigation can be had, except it be administered by the hand of mercy. How many of my hearers have realised the case in which a virtuous pair, joined in the holy bands of matrimony, have watched together in trembling anxiety the arrival of that eventful hour, which was to unite their hearts by a new tie, or separate them for ever. With what distressing agitation, and with what gloomy presages, has the wife brooded upon the untried, approaching, unavoidable scene; how has the husband employed every device and every effort to calm the perturbations of that heart which he wished always to be at peace, till finding every exertion unavailing, both together have dropped upon their knees, and committed the keeping of her body in well-doing into the hands of a faithful Creator. Think, then, ye mothers, if with every comfort at command, the prospect and the reality were so trying, what must be that same prospect and that same reality, rendered additionally awful by the terrors of poverty. Think, ye husbands, what it would be for you to anticipate such a season, for the object of your warmest earthly love, without a single comfort within your reach to mitigate the suffering which you know she must endure. Such a reflection must surely excite your tendcrest pity, and ensure your greatest liberality.

It is too probable that many excellent women are annually lost to their husbands and their families, through a want of those comforts, which the season of child-birth indispensably requires. Not that they actu-

ally die within the month of their confinement, but in consequence of not receiving the proper medical help, and especially of not having that suitable nourishment which nature demands when she begins to recover, their constitutions are impaired, and after struggling amidst increasing exertions for a few months or years, they sink to an early grave, and leave their children to the mercy of the world. It is an exercise of mercy, I admit, to take these babes from the arms of their expiring mothers, and bring them up with tenderness and care; but it is far greater mercy to do all in our power to continue to them the life and attention of those mothers themselves, whose place no stranger can entirely fill. Nor does the mischief of such neglect end here. Should the life of the mother be spared, it is with an enfeebled constitution which but ill qualifies her to discharge the duties of a nurse. The children in consequence grow up a weak and sickly race, unfitted, to a considerable extent, to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, and misery and want are thus perpetuated and entailed from one generation to another. Sound policy, therefore, no less than Christian mercy, should render the community peculiarly disposed to support, wherever they are necessary, such charities as that, the merits of which have now been detailed.

If anything more were wanting to ensure a liberal support of this excellent Institution, I would mention the genuine, ardent gratitude of those who, from time to time, have been relieved and assisted by its exertions. For it must be admitted, that although the coldness of ingratitude should not be allowed to freeze the stream of mercy, the ardour of a thankful heart causes it to flow in greater abundance, and with a more certain

course. The recipients of this charity are always, without exception, grateful for it.

Be merciful, therefore, in this, and in every other case of human misery, to the extent of your ability. Many will bless you for your benevolence: and even if gratitude had left the earth, your witness is in heaven, and your reward is on high. A day is approaching when, not a cup of cold water administered to the parched lips of wretchedness, in obedience to the authority, and in imitation of the mercy, of God, shall be either forgotten, or overlooked, by him who has the destiny of man at his disposal. To the solemnities and decisions of that day I refer you.

SMALL BEGINNINGS NOT TO BE DESPISED.

A SERMON,

PREACHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PORT OF LONDON SOCIETY,

FOR PROMOTING RELIGION AMONG SEAMEN,

ON BOARD THE FLOATING CHAPEL,

MOORED OFF WAPPING STAIRS, IN THE RIVER THAMES,

MAY 9. 1820.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which, indeed, is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree; so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

In an advertisement prefixed to this sermon the author states that the reader will find in one or two parts some slight resemblance to the mode of illustration adopted by Mr Jay in a sermon on the same text, but that it was impossible to avoid this without omitting sentiments naturally suggested by the words.

Zechariah iv, 9.

For who hath despised the day of small things?

Despondency paralyses exertion, but hope stimulates and supports it. The man who commences an undertaking with a foreboding that it will fail, is likely by his fears to ensure the fulfilment of his prediction; while, on the other hand, the hope of success is amongst the subordinate means of obtaining it. Every great undertaking, especially where the scheme is novel and the difficulties are many, requires in its agents a temperature of soul, if not approaching to enthusiasm, yet very far above lukewarmness or depression. To succeed, we must calculate upon success. It is very true there must be prudence, but it must not be that prudence which creates timidity and chills the ardour of the mind. It must guide but not freeze the current of our zeal.

Despondency is never so likely to be felt as at the commencement of an undertaking, when there are few to support it, and many to oppose it; when the beginning is so small as to excite the apprehensions of its friends, and the derision of its enemies. The Jews who returned from the Babylonish captivity felt this when they applied themselves to the rebuilding of the temple. Few in number, poor in circumstances, disheartened by

their poverty, and opposed by the restless malignity of crafty enemies, they proceeded for some time with cheerless heart. When the foundations of the sacred edifice were laid, the sires who had seen the magnitude and splendour of the first temple, wept as they foresaw how inferior to it would be the second. Their tears must have been as friendly to the hopes of their younger brethren, as a shower of hail is to the buds and blossoms of spring. The Samaritans derided the work with the most cruel scorn, and tauntingly exclaimed that if a fox ventured upon the wall, it would demolish the building. To complete the discouragement, the Jews in Chaldea despised the commencement as too feeble to be crowned with success, and on this ground excused themselves from returning to their own land, and to the assistance of their friends. Every thing was disheartening. At this critical juncture, the prophet was commissioned to encourage them in the name of the Lord. He was charged to assure them that Zerubbabel, who had laid the foundation, "thould bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying grace, grace unto it;" and that therefore the day of small things was not to be despised. The animating interrogation of the text has become the watchword of Christians in their labours of love; they have repeated it to each other as they have gone forth to their work, and when discouragement has lowered around them, they have, by the power of its fascination, charmed away their fears, and awakened their hopes.

This is my subject, then, on the present interesting occasion, "Small beginnings are not to be despised." I shall consider this sentiment in application to public institutions and to personal religion.

I. I shall apply the sentiment to those public institutions which have for their object the glory of God in the salvation of man. The age in which we live is happily and honourably distinguished by a spirit of religious zeal. The church of God, awakened from the slumber of ages, is going forth from the chamber of her too long repose, to do the work appointed to her by the Lord. Ingenuity has been united to benevolence, and the wisdom which descends from above into the mind of man, "has been seeking and watching for new forms of human want or misery, that it may meet them with new forms of pity and of aid. So many are the associations throughout our country, for humane and pious purposes of every form, that charity, where it has but a solitary offering, is almost bewildered in its choice." Institutions have arisen, and are still arising, intended and adapted to convey the blessings of eternal life to those who are perishing for lack of knowledge. Some of these are of a novel character, and others formed upon the model of societies which are already in existence, and in successful operation. Here, the friends of Immanuel unite their energies to send the gospel to the heathen; there, are others associated for the purpose of enlightening the heathen at home. Here, a few pious youths agree to commence a Sunday school in a village; and there, a band of zealous Christians combine their efforts to erect a new place of worship in a benighted part of a large and populous town. Here is commenced a society for distributing tracts, and there another for circulating the Scriptures. Here is a scheme for preaching the gospel to sailors, and there for extending a similar blessing to the inhabitants of a village. In many of these cases, things are sufficiently discouraging at the

beginning. Little patronage smiles upon the scheme, little property enriches its funds, little assistance is brought to its labours. The timid are afraid to act, the ignorant question, the cavilling object, the contemptuous sneer; and even many from whom better things might be expected refuse their help, till at length even the friends of the scheme themselves begin to fear that it must be abandoned. They only who have known by experience what it is to originate a new institution, especially if it be out of the ordinary routine of Christian effort, can form an adequate idea of the labour, patience, and heroism, which are requisite to carry it to maturity, amidst the doubts of the sceptical, the mistakes of the ignorant, the misrepresentations of the slanderous, and the cold and selfish calculations of the lukewarm. But still small beginnings are not to be despised; and I shall assign some reasons on which this sentiment is founded.

1. In many instances, the most wonderful effects have resulted from causes apparently very small. It is so in nature.* The oak, in whose mighty shade a herd of cattle repose and ruminate in comfort, was once an acorn, which an infant might have grasped in his hand, or a sparrow have carried in her beak. The river that floats a navy, and becomes the means of fertility and the inlet of wealth to an empire, if traced to its source, would be found a stream which the traveller might cover with his foot. It is the same in the intellectual world. There was a time when Johnson was learning his alphabet, Newton laying the basis of his mathematical fame in committing to memory the multiplica-

* The author is indebted to Mr. Jay's sermon on the same text for the ideas which suggested these illustrations of the sentiment.

tion table, and Milton catching the inspiration of poetry upon his mother's knee, from the rude hymns of his time. It is the same in the political world. Kingdoms, if traced to the first occasion of their eminence, would be found beginning with a thought or feeling in the bosom of ambition, a waking vision, or a midnight dream. But this idea is most strikingly exemplified in the world of grace. Survey the commencement of the Christian religion. You know to what an extent the gospel has prevailed. At one time it had spread over a great part of Asia and Africa, as well as of Europe. You know how many nations still profess to believe it. You know also that its influence shall be extended in the millennial period of the church, even till the whole earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. A time is at hand when not a vestige of many a wide-spread superstition shall be found upon the face of the earth, except in the museums of missionary societies. And what was the commencement of this universal religion? It happened that as a Jewish couple were journeying to be enrolled in their native city, they arrived at a village, where, not obtaining accommodation in the inn or caravanserai, they took up with the shelter of the stable. In this rude place, the female was overtaken by the pangs of labour. She was delivered of a child, which, for want of a cradle, she laid in the manger. There was the commencement upon earth of that scheme which shall fill the world with its blessings, and eternity with its fame. The child then introduced to mortal existence was the Son of God and the Saviour of men. All the past triumphs of the gospel, all that it is now doing, all the glorious victories it is yet to achieve, originated in the stable of Bethlehem.

Retrace the cause of Protestantism to its commencement. Look abroad on that great portion of Europe which has shaken off the yoke of Rome, and is now enjoying the light of a purer faith: England, Scotland, Holland, Switzerland, the Protestant States of Germany, Sweden, Denmark, all once followed the beast and bore his image. Fifty millions are now asserting their right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, who, three centuries ago, were groaning beneath the fetters of the man of sin. And what was Protestantism in its origin? A confederation of monarchs and bishops uniting their energies to resist and break the tyranny that had so long oppressed the world? Nothing of the sort. It was merely the opposition of an Augustine monk to a Dominican friar respecting the flagitious practice of selling indulgences. It was confined to the bosom of Luther, who himself knew no more whither his zeal was carrying him than his opponent did. His increasing efforts in opposition to the papal superstition were for a long time despised by those who had the greatest interest in opposing and arresting them, as is evident from the reply of Leo the Tenth to an ecclesiastic who had sent him some of Luther's works: "Brother Martin," said the pope in his letter, "is a man of fine genius, and these squabbles are only the effusions of monastic envy."

Contemplate the progress of Methodism, from its small beginnings, under its indefatigable founder. That system which now reckons nearly half a million members and a thousand preachers, which has its missionaries in every quarter of the globe, which is continually and deservedly rising in public esteem, was, about seventy years ago, confined to two ministers, and some

thirty or forty members, who had to work their way against the brutal violence of the mob, the injustice of magistrates, the frowns of lukewarm Christians, and the contempt of infidels. The history of this indefatigable, zealous, and useful denomination, will stand to the end of time, as a check to the despondency, and an encouragement to the hopes, of those who are anxious to glorify God in seeking the salvation of their fellow-creatures.

Meditate upon the beginnings of the most illustrious of the institutions which are now employed for the benefit of the human race. The London Missionary Society, which expends nearly thirty thousand pounds a year in the spread of the gospel amongst the heathen; which has more than a hundred missionaries spread over Europe, Asia, Africa, and America; which has been the means of abolishing idolatry in eight islands of the Southern Pacific Ocean, and establishing churches in the heart of South Africa, and printing the Scriptures in a language spoken by a fourth part of the inhabitants of the globe, was, twenty-six years ago, confined to the consultations of nine ministers, who met in the metropolis to make the matter a subject of conference and prayer.

The Baptist Mission to the East, whose labours in the department of translating the Scriptures into the oriental languages, are so incredibly great and successful, as to render almost superfluous the gift of tongues; which can number amongst its agents men whose fame in Eastern literature has eclipsed the splendour of Sir William Jones's name; which has infused the leaven of Christian truth and Christian principle into many parts of the great mass of the Indian population, from the

mouths of the Ganges to the banks of the Indus: this distinguished society was, eight and twenty years ago, the project of a few ministers associated at Kettering, the most active and zealous of whom, notwithstanding his present unrivalled literary renown, was then working at one of the humblest trades; and though distributing the bread of life to others on a sabbath, was on other days earning his own daily bread by the sweat of his brow.

The British and Foreign Bible Society, that most splendid luminary in the firmament of religious benevolence, holding its high station, surrounded by a thousand satellites, and perpetually pouring the light of revelation upon millions who, without it, must sit in darkness; that most glorious society, which has already spent (if we take into calculation what has been expended by similar institutions abroad) a million sterling, and put into circulation three million copies of the Scriptures; whose praises are heard in nearly all lands, for nearly all lands on earth receive its benefits; that sublime association was, sixteen years ago, no more than a purpose entertained by a few Christians met together as a committee to transact the business of another religious institution; a purpose arising incidentally out of an application then made by a minister present for assistance to supply his Welsh brethren with an edition of the Scriptures in their own tongue. Had the most sanguine enthusiast heard their conversation and their purpose, and seen them meet again and again, as the object swelled in magnitude, and brightened in glory upon their view, would he have anticipated a hundredth part of what has been done; or had he ventured to predict that so much would have been accomplished in

sixteen years, would not more cool and calculating minds have declared that his enthusiasm had risen to madness? All these instances are striking illustrations of the sentiment that "small beginnings are not to be despised;" and that the most astonishing effects frequently arise from causes apparently feeble. Let the Christian philanthropist, who, amidst the difficulties with which he has to contend in the prosecution of his schemes, is ready to despond, look at these sublime monuments of Christian zeal, thank God, and take courage. Let him see from what little springs of benevolence have arisen the mightiest rivers which ever flowed through the wilderness of human ignorance, want, and misery.

2. We should not despise the day of small things, because the power of God can still render the feeblest instruments productive of the greatest results. Omnipotence is among the most sublime and glorious attributes of Jehovah. It is celebrated in the loftiest strains upon the pages of revelation, and is manifested by all the works and wonders of creation. It is the terror of the wicked, and the confidence of the righteous: the comfort and the refuge of human weakness. By omnipotence we mean God's ability to do every thing which his wisdom determines right to be done. In relation to such a being, difficulty is a word without meaning. He can work by feeble means, without means, or against them. He spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast. In innumerable instances he has employed, and rendered successful, instruments which were the last that we should have chosen. The rod of Moses was, in all probability, a rough, shapeless, and fragile stick, and yet what wonders were wrought by it. Who would have

thought of besieging a fortified city with the blast of rams' horns, or attacking an intrenched camp with lamps and pitchers; or overcoming the powers of darkness, and foiling the gates of hell, by the crucifixion of their Opponent. When a new religion was to be established upon the ruins of those previously existing in the world, and all nations were to be converted to it from systems to which they were rivetted by all the power of prejudice, pride, and superstition, who would have selected fishermen to be its apostles, or what could have rendered them successful in their mission? "Ye see your calling, brethren," said the apostle, "how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence;" and "that the excellency of the power might be of God." What could be a brighter display of divine power than empowering men whose knowledge was confined to the best method of catching fish, and mending nets, to contend with and conquer the sages, the systems and the pride of philosophy, and to break down a religion supported by authority and literature, the power of education, and the force of example.

But this view of the Divine operations does not warrant us in any pretension to an extraordinary commission, or any enthusiastic expectation; we are not to assume that we are raised up for some great purpose, and to accomplish some great revolution, and appeal to the

power of God as containing our inexhaustible resources. However, we may oppose the thought of what God has done, and what he can do, to that desponding sense of our own feebleness, which would chill all the energies of the soul, and freeze the stream of benevolence at its source. Man requires in every case, an apparatus proportioned to the effects to be produced, and his physical power must be raised to the measure of the expected result. It is not so in the moral world and with God. Here there are no data on which to found a calculation. All is the effect of a sovereign agent who works when, and how, and by whom he will. We are certainly to use appropriate and adequate means, so far as the judgment of reason goes, but the greater may be inefficient, and the lesser effectual. The religious tract may impress where the Bible has failed. The feeblest preacher may be the honoured instrument of conversion, when the most eloquent has preached in vain. All this should certainly encourage us to persevere amidst many things calculated to produce depression and despondency. When we have formed our schemes as they ever ought to be formed, upon scripture principles, and with religious discretion, let us then take them by prayer to the footstool of the divine throne, where, for our comfort we shall hear it declared, "that power belongeth unto God."

3. It should guard us against despising the day of small things, to remember that, however discouraging appearances may be, we never know what God really intends to do by us. The power of penetrating into futurity is wisely and mercifully denied us. Man would be no gainer, so far as his happiness is concerned, by being the prophet of his own history. In some cases

we should be cheered by a foresight of success, and the joys in store for us; but upon the whole, it is infinitely in our favour that both our joys and our sorrows should be disclosed to us only by the moments that give them birth. So we can never look to the result of our actions in their influence upon others. No man who devotes himself to the cause of religious benevolence can say what use God intends to make of him, but it is often far greater than he is aware. Little did it enter into the mind of Raikes, when, touched with compassion for the ignorant and wicked youth of Gloucester, he collected them to learn their letters, and then led the little ragged group from the scene of instruction to the house of God; that he was at that time laying the foundation of a system which would spread throughout England, and, finally, over the world; which would follow in the train of Christianity to whatever land she directed her course. As little did it enter the mind of Wesley, when he formed his first class of serious Christians, that he was originating in the religious world a new denomination, which is bidding fair to rival the others in numbers, as it certainly excels them in zeal. So when a friend of the rising generation collects a Sunday school for poor children, it is not for him to conjecture what characters are to issue thence to reform the world, or bless the church. Talents rude, misshapen, and mingled even with the basest properties, like gold in a rock, may there be elicited, preparatory to their being at last exhibited to the world in the character of the eloquent preacher, or the faithful missionary. When a new place of Christian worship is erected, who will undertake to predict where the stream of ministerial success shall first gush forth, what shall be its meandering course,

where it shall touch in its progress, what moral fertility it shall produce, and how long it shall be ere it is lost in the ocean of universal good?

If any one convert a sinner from the error of his ways and save a soul from death, he may seem to have performed one single act of usefulness: but that one single act may be the commencement of a series, which, in breadth may reach to the ends of the earth, and in length, to the end of time. The converted sinner may be, in his turn, the instrument of conversion to another, who removing to a distant clime, may carry the glad tidings of salvation to India or Siam; and again, the first convert becoming the head of a family, may transmit religion to his children, and they to theirs, till the stream of good flowing onward from generation to generation, and widening as it flows, shall be arrested only by the blast of the archangel's trump. And it is to be recollected, that the righteous are to be rewarded, not only according to their doings, but according to the fruit of their doings: not only for the single act of sowing the good seed of the kingdom in one barren spot, but for all the waving harvests, which, during a long succession of ages, shall have sprung by the power of reproduction from the original grain.

4. We should not despise the day of small things, because, in religion, what may seem little by comparison, is, when viewed positively and absolutely, immensely great. In the administration of temporal benevolence, we naturally require the prospect of success in some measure proportionate, as to the number of objects relieved, to our labour and expense. Who would build a hospital for the sake of receiving a single patient, or an almshouse to accommodate a single

pauper? In such a case benevolence would be really defeated in its object, and it would not be worth while to do so much for the accomplishment of so little. There is nothing in the individual object which can give it importance; this must be derived from an aggregate of many such. But this remark will not apply to the objects of religious benevolence. The soul of man derives from its immortality, a worth which defies all calculation. It waits not for an accession of others of its species before it can assume that degree of importance which would justify extended, laborious, or expensive means for its salvation. Its individual value is immense and incalculable. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" was a question proposed by Him, who, having made both the world and the soul, must know their relative value, and cannot be suspected of unduly elevating the one, or depreciating the other. "What, my brethren, if it be lawful to indulge such a thought, what would be the funeral obsequies of a lost soul? Where shall we find the tears fit to be wept at such a spectacle? Or could we realise the calamity in all its extent, what tokens of commiseration and concern would be deemed equal to the occasion? Would it suffice for the sun to veil his light, and the moon her brightness; to cover the ocean with mourning, and the heavens with sackcloth; or, were the whole fabric of nature to become animated and vocal, would it be possible for her to utter a groan too deep, or a cry too piercing, to express the magnitude and extent of such a catastrophe?" Surely then, no effort or expense can be thought ill bestowed or unsuccessful which has been the means of averting, even in a single instance, so indescribable a catastrophe.

How comes it to pass, then, that we are so little affected by the salvation of a single soul, when from time to time it occurs? How is it that when we do not hear of many souls converted, we seem to feel as if nothing had been done? There can be but one reason assigned, and that is, we look at the innumerable multitude which are seen to remain in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity. It is a dreadful state of things where the prevalence of evil is so great that we feel almost discouraged from attempting to counteract it by individual instances of good. Just as a person who beheld the ravages of the plague, would scarcely think it worth while to save one or two of his fellow-creatures from death, while hundreds and thousands were expiring weekly. So amidst the millions who are dying under the power of that moral pestilence which rages through the earth, we think too little of rescuing one and another from the prevailing ruin; indeed, the very excess of destruction seems to blunt our feelings. In gazing round upon an extensive churchyard, the thought of death itself is less through the number of its subjects; the mind wanders off from the evil itself to its commonness, and then returns from this commonness to the evil, with its sensibilities wonderfully hardened. One single hillock in a desert, where a fellow-creature sleeps in solitude, or one uncoffined corpse, will probably affect us more than the most crowded burial grounds. We view our success relatively, and judge of it by comparison. If only a single child in a school is devoutly impressed, we immediately ask what is one out of two or three hundred? When a solitary individual in a congregation is converted from the error of his ways, we make a similar enquiry; especially are we in danger of this when we

hear of the conversion of only a small number of the heathen; What are they, we exclaim, out of so many? What is even a hundred reclaimed from six hundred millions? Small, it is admitted, very small indeed. But let us judge of our achievements by their absolute value. Let us individualise each case, let us set the soul of one man apart by itself. Let us view it in its amazing value; let us think what the salvation or the loss of but one human spirit includes! Such is the worth of the soul and the measureless importance of its interests, that if only one human spirit had strayed from the fold of God, all the angels in glory would think themselves well employed to go in quest of the wanderer. The recovery of this single immortal from the horrors of perdition, would be accounted an object of sufficient importance, to combine and employ the energies of the universe. This is evident from the fact of there being joy among the angels of God over every sinner that repenteth. All heaven partakes of new raptures, not merely when a nation is born in a day, but at the nativity of every child of God. Let us, then, look at our success more in the abstract. Not that we should be content to seek for little, or be indifferent whether we have little or much. I am not now stating the consideration which should regulate a Christian's desires, but such as may dissipate his gloom, and resist his despondency in a season of comparative discouragement. If it be the will of God to grant it us, we should seek to turn many to righteousness; but where this is denied, we should think of the amount of good which has been achieved, if but a single soul has been saved by our instrumentality. In this case, instead of looking with a desponding eye upon the multitude who are not

saved, let us look with delight upon the one who is, and think of the infinite and eternal happiness which will be connected with that solitary instance of success.

We may offend against the injunction of the text by inattention. Whenever a scheme is submitted to our notice, professing to have for its object the glory of God and the best interests of man, let us not turn away with heedless indifference, and refuse to examine its claims. It may be novel, it may be apparently insignificant, but let it be examined. I am not advocating an indiscriminate precipitate zeal. There may be a spirit of speculation in the religious world, as well as in commerce, which is no less injurious to solid piety in the one, than to mercantile confidence in the other. We are not to countenance the wild projects of every religious adventurer, but examination is desirable in every case, to detect and expose what is bad, as well as to support what is good.

Scorn is another way of despising the day of small things. If the object of a scheme be good, if the means appear adapted to the end, let it not be contemned because it is at present in the infancy of its age and of its strength. Its supporters may be few and poor, its funds may be low, its commencement may be feeble, but let the benevolence of its design protect it from the sneer of contempt. All that is sublime in Christianity was once confined to a little circle of poor men and women. To despise an institution because it is yet limited and contracted in its operations, is like ridiculing an infant for not being a man at once.

Neglect is another way of sinning against the letter and spirit of the text. There are some, who, although convinced that the object of an institution is good, and

who, on this ground, are kept from treating it with contempt, yet deem it prudent to withhold their support till it has become more generally known, and more firmly established. They wait till it has been tried. If it be successful, they will assist its operations; if it be popular, they will join the train of its admirers. But they forget that if all men acted upon their starving prudence, it is impossible that any scheme should prosper. Every society which is now shedding blessings upon the world, would, upon this principle, have withered in the bud for want of nourishment. Many a noble philanthropic plan, has, we fear, perished at the feet of its disinterested projector, while men of cold and calculating prudence were waiting to see if it succeeded. To assist an object when it is in the zenith of its prosperity has little merit, it is sure then to find friends; but it is a noble and heroic zeal to come forward in its support when it is struggling for existence amidst its own weakness and the suspicion, inattention, neglect, and ridicule of bystanders. Let us take care of the poor friendless infant, the popular and prosperous man can take care of himself. There is a period in the history of every society when our help would be tenfold more valuable than at any other time; in such a crisis, whenever it occurs, let us not be backward.

Especially, let those who are the principal agents in schemes of benevolence, beware of despising the day of small things. Let them not too soon sink into a state of depression. Despondency will not only paralyse their own energies, and thus prevent the success they covet, but it will operate like the touch of the torpedo, on all that come within their reach. They must not be too sanguine to be prudent, but a little

enthusiasm is far better than much despondency. They are leaders, and a panic in the commander is sure to communicate itself to the troops. They must appear cheerful amidst discouragement, and hopeful amidst defeat. If they have fears, they must conceal them, and exhibit only their hopes. Their courage must be the rallying point and the inspiring theme for all the circle. The neglect and inattention of others must have no other effect than to increase their own diligence, and like a mother who loves her babe the more for the persecution and contumely to which it is exposed, they must cling the closer to their favourite object, in proportion as others, who do not understand it, treat it with contempt.

II. I shall now apply the sentiment of the text to personal religion. 1. Religion is often small in its commencement. This is not always the case. Sometimes a transformation of character takes place, as complete as it is rapid. Many persons of notoriously vicious character have been so entirely changed under a single sermon, that in all their views, pursuits, and feelings, they have been, from that hour, new creatures in Christ Jesus. Such instances of conversion are not the ordinary method of Divine procedure; but to deny that they ever take place, is to contend against indubitable testimony. The historical parts of the New Testament furnish many cases of this nature, amongst which, the conversion of St. Paul bears a distinguished place. It must be admitted, however, that the usual process of this great change is much more slow. The figures by which it is set forth in the Word of God represent it as a gradual work. "The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect

day." The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which advances through all the stages of intermediate growth to the magnitude of a tree. A Christian is first a babe, then a young man, then a father in Christ. In the growth of religion there is first the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. All these figures imply small beginnings, and slow advances.

A pious emotion produced in the heart of a child, when her mother was explaining to her the catechism which she had committed to memory; or a devout seriousness impressed upon her mind by reading the obituary of some holy youth; the pang of compunction excited in the soul of a Sunday school boy, by the affectionate expostulation of his teacher; the reflection of a prodigal, in the land of his wanderings and his vices, upon the admonitions he had received in his father's house; the enquiry awakened in a thoughtless bosom by a hint dropped in company; such have been the beginnings, in many cases, of that religion which terminates in life eternal. But we will represent it in a form of more frequent occurrence. How often does this great work begin in the soul under a sermon, to which the sinner was drawn by no better motive than that of curiosity? While hearing the word with listless indifference, his attention is roused and fixed by some pointed remark of the preacher, which, soft and silent as the seed that drops from the wings of the wind, and radicates, where it drops, lights upon his soul, and produces a secret conviction that makes him return less easy than he came. It is not strong enough to restrain him from his evil practices, but it prevents him from enjoying them as he once did. He is less happy in evil company,

wishes that he had never heard the sermon which has thus interrupted his comfort, and begins to feel angry with the preacher that has disturbed his peace. Yet he must go and hear him again. Every sermon increases his uneasiness, and yet such is the power of the fascination that he cannot keep away. The evil of sin in general, and of his own in particular, increases upon his view. He determines to break off wrong practices, and perform religious duties. All is now peace. He is pleased with himself, and expects that God is pleased with him too. The preacher, however, totally disturbs this groundless repose, by asserting that it is not by works of righteousness which we can do, that salvation is to be obtained. He is now plunged into the deepest distress, perplexity, and despondency. How then can he be saved? He is ready to give up all for lost, and since he cannot be saved by his good deeds, has serious thoughts of returning to his bad ones; for no man is in greater danger of being rivetted to his sins than he who despairs of their being pardoned. In this situation he hears a discourse on the nature of justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ. This is what he wanted. It suits his case. He believes, and enters into rest. However, his knowledge may awhile remain contracted, his faith weak, his peace easily disturbed.

2. There are many ways in which the day of small things, in this application of the sentiment, may be despised. It may be ridiculed as the fanaticism of a weak mind, or the enthusiasm of a heated imagination, or the whim of a capricious taste. Many of the convictions, tastes, and pursuits of spiritual religion, must necessarily appear so singular to one who is a stranger to them, that it is no wonder he should smile at them.

Let the scorner, however, beware, for ridicule at religion is most dangerous sport. Piety is the image of God in the soul of man, and an insult offered to a portrait, is in every case, next in crime to mocking the original. Let those who are the objects of this unhallowed mirth be mild but firm. Let them take it patiently, and it will be soon terminated. There is nothing men are more unwilling to spend in vain than their scorn. They can never endure long to waste their sneers upon a rock which neither feels them nor yields to them.

Ridicule is not unfrequently coupled with direct opposition. Men who find that laughter avails nothing, are very likely to exchange it for wrath, and try to effect by frowns what could not be accomplished by jests. This was the case with the enemies of the Jews who opposed the rebuilding of the temple. Persecutors vary both their weapons and their method of attack. But in the case of real religion, they are all alike unsuccessful. They may as well attempt to arrest the tempest in its flight, as to stop the course of a soul which is soaring to heaven on the pinions of faith and love. They may as soon hope to extinguish the splendour of the noonday sun, as expect to put out the light of divine truth in a mind which has been illuminated by the Spirit of God. If they would try their strength, let them go to the forest, and pluck up the veteran oak by the roots, for this is an easier achievement than to eradicate the veriest sapling which the hand of the Lord hath planted in his garden.

Neglect, however, is that which comes more immediately within the spirit of this part of the subject, as a method of despising the day of small things. The first appearances of religion in the soul do not always receive

from others the prompt, affectionate, and skilful attention, which they demand and deserve. There is a most criminal inattention to this subject prevailing very extensively in the churches of God. Persons whose minds have been recently impressed with a sense of the necessity and importance of religion, who have entered the paths of wisdom, with timid and feeble steps, but who are deeply and tremblingly anxious to proceed, are too often left to journey onward amidst every discouragement, without one single friend to congratulate them on their past progress, or to help them in their future course. Of what service to such young travellers would be the smile, and the advice, and the encouragement of those who had been long in the way! First impressions, however deep, unless carefully watched, like the young buds of fruit trees in the spring, will soon fall off from the mind and come to nothing. It is a wretched perversion of a sublime and awful doctrine to say, "That if the work be of God it will go on without us, and if it be not, our exertions cannot perpetuate it." The same remark will apply with just as much propriety to the beginning of religion, and render preaching useless; for he carries on by means, no less than he begins by them. There are many persons, it is to be feared, who would hear with indifference and neglect the very question of the Philippian jailor again asked with agony not inferior to his, "What shall I do to be saved?" The cold unconcern and unbending stiffness of some who stand high in the churches of Christ, are as reproachful to themselves as they are injurious to others. It is truly shocking to see with what inattention in some cases, and with what suspicion in others, persons under the deepest religious concern, are treated by those who

ought to know better. Instead of this miserable and ruinous caution, we all ought to rejoice in the first marks of true religion in any one, whether a stranger, or an enemy, or a friend. In default of abler assistance, we should offer him our own. We should give him every help. If he be timid, we should encourage him; if he be wavering, we should strive to settle him; if he be ignorant, we should teach him; if he be alarmed, we should soothe him; if he grow but slowly, we should bear with his dulness; if he sometimes disappoint our expectation, we should mourn over him, but not abandon him; if he turn a little out of his course, we should follow him in his wanderings, and not in anger give him up to stray farther and farther: we should conciliate him by our affection; we should guard him by our caution; we should help him by our experience; and especially should we bless him by our prayers. We should never cease our solicitude or our efforts till the day of small things is become a day of great ones, or has terminated in the rayless night of utter apostacy. This cannot be more than the nature of the case requires, for it is on behalf of a soul that must for ever live in rapture or in woe: and the man that would not spend a lengthened life, or travel round the circumference of the globe to save the soul of another, cannot yet have learnt the value of his own.

3. There are many reasons why the day of small things ought not to be despised. It is not despised by those who best know its importance. It is not neglected or contemned by the Eternal Father. How affectingly is this set forth in the beautiful parable of the prodigal son. I need not inform you whose grace and compassion are represented in that inimitable pie-

ture, under the character of the parent. When the youth had left the house which had so long sheltered him, did the father remain contented and careless at home? No, he went out to look for his wandering child. When he saw the profligate coming at a distance, the spectacle of misery and want, did he return to wait his arrival in the house? No, he ran to meet him, and was the only one of the two that did run. When he beheld him covered with rags and wretchedness, did he determine before he embraced or received him to his favour to have all the rags of his disgrace stripped off, and have the youth put upon his probation? O, no. There and then as he found him, when filial feelings first returned to the bosom of the prodigal, and in the very beginning of his obedience, the father fell upon his neck, and kissed him. So truly and so tenderly does the God of love rejoice over the commencement of true piety. It was but a day or two after Saul of Tarsus had been breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples, that the Lord exhibited him to heaven and earth at once, as a favourite of his heart, in that well-known language, "Behold he prayeth." The first groan of the genuine penitent is pleasant in the ears of Jehovah as the music of the spheres, or the melodies of angels, and if he could not listen to both at the same time, he would command silence in heaven and hush the choirs above, that the cry for mercy might ascend and be heard. Nor is the day of small things despised by Jesus Christ. To him the spirit of prophecy gave witness that he should "feed his flock like a shepherd, and gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom." In his bosom, where he could not only hear, but feel every bleat they uttered; and have

all the tenderness of his own heart excited by the anxious and fluttering pulsations of theirs. See him in the midst of his disciples. How feeble were their perceptions, how weak their faith, how worldly their expectations, how slow their improvement. Yet how kindly did he bear with their dulness, and how gently did he chide their imperfections. Whom did he ever reject that came to him in earnest, how recent soever were their convictions of his divine mission, or their impressions of their own sins? When the woman who had been a sinner knelt weeping at his feet, and the proud pharisee in the company scorned the sorrow of her bursting heart, the Saviour of the world turning to her with all the mercy and dignity of his character, accepted her penitence, pardoned her sins, and sent her away both holy and happy. When the man who had been a robber was bleeding for his crimes by the side of Jesus on the cross, though his penitence probably never commenced till he was transfixed to the tree, when he turned his expiring eyes to the Saviour and asked his mercy, was his prayer rejected?

Do the angels despise the day of small things? If they did, they would suspend the expressions of their delight till they beheld the redeemed sinner approaching the gates of the celestial city, in the perfection of his graces; instead however, of waiting for the termination of his career, they rejoice with unutterable joy at its commencement, and from that moment, become, with delight, the ministering spirits of the new-born heir of salvation. Nor does the mysterious, mighty enemy of God and man, look with contempt upon the beginnings of religion. The first tear of penitence, which drops from the sinner's eye, fills him with alarm, and

sets in motion all his craft and power to resist the growing work of grace.

Another reason why we should not despise the beginnings of religion, is, that they lead on to great and glorious attainments. The traveller who has been journeying amidst the gloom of midnight, despises not the little luminous streak above the eastern hills, for he knows that it is the glimmering token of advancing day. The husbandman who has sown the precious grain despises not the downy verdure which first appears just above the clods, for in that he sees the future harvest which is to repay his toil. The mother despises not the helpless babe to which she has given birth, for in that feeble and unconscious child, she knows there are the germs of fancy, reason, will, and multiform affections, which shall grow with his growth, and strengthen with his strength, and which, by the fruits of their maturity, may bless and astonish the world. So it is in religion, little things advance to great ones. Baxter, and Owen, and Howe, and Doddridge were once babes in Christ, and so, indeed, were Paul, and Peter, and John. When the conversion of a sinner takes place, no mind but that which grasps eternity, can foresee the career of usefulness and holiness, which such a convert may have to run. In every case of real conversion, there will be a progress from a sinner to a penitent; from a penitent to a believer; from a believer to a saint; from a saint to a seraph. He shall "add to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." That first dawn of spiritual knowledge in the understanding is the kindling of a holy luminary,

which shall receive and reflect as a satellite, the splendour of the fountain light, infinite ages after the sun is quenched in darkness. That first tasting that the Lord is gracious, is the incipient operation of a capacity for bliss, which shall continue to receive ineffable delight, when all the sources of sensual gratification shall have perished for ever. In the train of even weak grace, if it be real, shall follow all the more mature virtues of christianity; all that the Father hath prepared for them that love him; all that the Son hath procured by the agonies of the cross; all the mercies of the covenant of redemption; all the riches of grace; all the exceeding and eternal weight of glory; in short, blessings infinite and eternal. Let not the commencement of religion, therefore, be treated with neglect.

4. I shall now direct the subject to the attention of several distinct classes of persons, to whom it seems peculiarly suitable. It utters a most impressive admonition to ministers. To us, in a peculiar manner, is entrusted the care of souls. We labour for immortality. Our work outlives the world. The success which follows our exertions will appear before our eyes in the form of glorified spirits, through the flight of everlasting ages. What a motive to diligence! The object of our ambition should be the conversion of sinners. Every thing short of this is, comparatively speaking, labour lost. When I say the conversion of sinners, I do not mean their first impressions merely; but a continued solicitude so to minister to their spiritual welfare, as that we may at last present them perfect before Christ Jesus. Religion is considered, both by ministers and hearers, too much in the light of a state, which being attained to, the care and solicitude necessary to reach it, may, in some degree

be remitted. There certainly cannot be too much anxiety for the production of first impressions, but ministerial anxiety seems too often to terminate here. There is not all that diligence which there should be, in nurturing these beginnings of piety. It appears to me that the preacher is everything in the present age, and the pastor nothing. We shoot the arrow amongst the herd, but do not follow the stricken deer to the thicket, where he bleeds and languishes alone. We are too apt to consider, that, after we have been the means of awakening our hearers, we have nothing more to do with them, till they come before us in the character of candidates for fellowship. Mr. Wesley adopted it as a maxim, never to strike a blow in any place, which he was not prepared to follow up; and this was wise. Serious impressions never leave the soul as they find it. Like heated iron, the mind which receives them, if not bent while it is warm, becomes more hard when it is cold. The beginnings of religion in our hearers should therefore call forth all our solicitude and tenderness. Those who may have been recently awakened should be encouraged to visit us for private and personal discourse, should be received with the utmost affection, and dealt with in the most tender and patient manner. Let not that spiritual husbandman wonder or complain that he gathers little fruit, who neglects to shelter and protect the buds and the blossoms.

Parents stand next in responsibility to ministers. The souls no less than the bodies of their children are confided to their vigilant attention. They should be tremblingly anxious for the eternal salvation of their offspring, to whom they have been the means of communicating a tainted existence. They should teach them the prin-

ciples of religion, enforce those precepts by admonition, recommend them by example, and follow them with prayer. Having done this they should then look for the fruit of their labours. No sooner does the feeblest appearance of true piety present itself, than it should be encouraged to the uttermost. Say not, it is only "the morning cloud or early dew which will soon vanish away." How do you know it is? Cherish devout impressions upon their hearts: and, for this purpose, encourage them to unburthen their minds to you; draw forth the state of their souls; question them in an affectionate manner; render yourselves their familiar friend, to whom all their feelings and their fears will be conveyed. What christian parent is that who can treat any promising marks of piety in his child with neglect? Does the parent eagle wait for, and seize the favourable moment for teaching her eaglets, and assisting their first efforts, to prove their new-formed pinions; and the lark hover over the nest of her just fledged young, and with her wing and her song invite them to the skies, and shall not the christian mother teach her young to soar to heaven, and help their first attempts!

Sunday school teachers, never forget that the ultimate object of your exertion, is to save the souls of your scholars from everlasting death. For this labour and pray. And should you perceive, at any time, in the little circles that collect around you on the sabbath, a countenance oppressed with anxiety, and seeming, from behind a veil of modesty forbidding the use of words, to say, "What shall I do to be saved?" do not, I beseech you, do not pass it by with inattention and neglect. Do not, with a most guilty carelessness, exclaim, "O, it is only the emotions of a child whose mind

is very susceptible, but which, I doubt not, will soon relapse into its former state of indifference. I have known her thus moved before, but she soon lost all her impressions again." And how came she to lose them? Because you neglected to cherish and deepen them. Instead of such conduct, never let a tearful eye, a serious look, or enquiring countenance escape your notice. Remember you watch for souls. The prize is infinite, and he that winneth it is wise indeed.

Christians, are there none amongst your acquaintance whose attention has recently been awakened and directed to the concerns of eternity, and who are in that state of deep anxiety which prepares them to welcome even a child that could instruct them in the things that belong to their peace? You have seen the change produced in their manner of attending upon the solemnities of public worship. You have beheld the head, which once was lifted so high in pride and vanity, dropping on the labouring bosom to conceal from the public gaze the emotions which had been excited within. You have seen the roving, restless eye, which so lately wandered round the assembly in vacant or curious mood, fixed on the preacher's lips, and suffused with the tear of godly sorrow. You have witnessed how serious, abstracted, and absorbed that countenance left the sanctuary, which used to depart in all the flutter of vanity and frivolity. And can you be an indifferent spectator of all this? Shame on you if you can. Follow these newly awakened persons home to the scene of their private solicitude. You will need no apology for the intrusion, but will be hailed with the exclamation, "How beautiful are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings." Go and pour the balm of consolation into the heart which God hath

wounded. Go and soothe their anxieties, instruct their ignorance, and encourage their hopes. Aspire to the high honour and rich reward of assisting a soul in her efforts to gain the prize of immortality.

To those who are just commencing the life of religion, the subject addresses itself with emphatic accents. If these beginnings of piety are not to be despised by spectators, much less should they be contemned by the subjects of them. Neglect not the slightest impression or conviction of a religious nature. Do not, for the world, treat it with indifference. It may be the spirit's rising beam, the dawn of an eternal day, the commencement of everlasting life. If your mind has been awakened from the deep slumber of an unregenerate state, be tremblingly anxious that it may not sink back again into spiritual lethargy. It is the day of your visitation from God. He has approached you with salvation in his hand. "O, seek him while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Do not say, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of his ways." Our Lord, when desired by the Gergesenes to leave their coasts, complied with their requests, and visited them no more. A state of religious conviction forms a crisis in the history of every sinner. The balance of his destiny is then seen quivering, and angels and devils are watching with solicitude to see in what manner it will settle. Next to an actual plunge into the bottomless pit, there is nothing he should more dread than losing these impressions, and relapsing again into the quietude of unregeneracy. Let him earnestly pray to God, and let the subject of his prayer be the permanency and increase of those views and feelings which have been recently produced in his soul.

In the progress of the work of grace, let not the young convert be too much depressed and discouraged by the slowness of his attainments. If his knowledge be contracted, if his hopes be sometimes low, his faith weak, his enjoyments limited, let him be roused to go forward, but not conclude that he has yet to begin the christian race. Let him not compare himself with others who have been long in the way, and because he cannot reach their advances, be disheartened and discouraged. The plant is not to compare itself with the veteran tree, and to be discouraged at its inferiority. Pride is often at the bottom of such discouragement. Humility would make us thankful for any measure of grace, and anxious to obtain more. Consciousness of our defects should not make us despond, but stir us up to diligence. The Christian cannot pass at once from the feebleness of infancy to the strength of manhood. He must go through the intermediate stages of the spiritual life. The believer, whose strength and stature he so much admires, was once a babe like himself, and probably at one time was subject to all the fears that agitate his own bosom. Instead of saying, "Oh, I shall never understand the doctrines of the gospel, and may as well give up the study. I shall never overcome the world by faith, and may as well retire from the field. I shall never subdue the evil propensities of my nature, and may as well yield myself their captive;" let him think how much more knowledge, separation from the world, and control over his corruptions, God has already granted him, than he once possessed. If he does not see that the top-stone of the spiritual temple is likely soon to be brought forth, does he not discern the foundation rising out of the ground?

At the same time that discouragement is prevented, let not any one rest satisfied with the day of small things. If we are not to think too little of beginnings, we are, on the other hand, not to think too much of them. Despondency is that enemy of religion, which it is the design of this discourse to attack and to destroy, and it would be an abuse of the subject, if indolence and self-complacency should be encouraged. Why is the day of small things not to be despised? That the subject of them may not be discouraged from seeking greater things. Despondency prevents a person from doing anything: it chains him as with a fetter to the earth. To break this fetter has been the object of the present discourse, that the disenthralled captive might be set at liberty for noble exploits. Let him arise from his prostration, and looking up to him who giveth more grace, let him expect great things, and attempt great things. The man who thinks he has religion enough cannot give a more decisive proof that he has none. There is in true godliness an insatiable thirst after larger attainments in knowledge, in faith, in hope, in love, and in purity. Wherefore let every real Christian adopt the language of St. Paul, and act up to the avowal, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus."

To conclude, let us be anxious neither to mistake the day of small things, nor to despise it, nor to rest satisfied with it. The history and progress of the Port of London Society exhibit a practical illustration of the spirit of the text. In this age of benevolent ingenuity it has

often been asked, "What new and useful scheme can yet be devised for extending the benefits of christian charity to some class of human beings whose miserable condition has hitherto been overlooked in the distribution of benevolence?" In reply, it was suggested by some enlightened and public spirited individuals, that nothing in a way of distinct and systematic effort had been attempted for improving the moral condition of our sailors. This led to the establishment of the Merchant Seaman's Auxiliary Bible Society, to the utility of which the most abundant and delightful testimony has already been afforded. Still, however, as the ministry of the word is the great instrument ordained of God for the conversion and sanctification of sinful men, the projectors of the Port of London Society most judiciously determined that the best way of furnishing sailors with the means of public worship was to provide a chapel, of a form and situation which would be rendered interesting by all their feelings, habits, and pursuits. The vessel in which we are now assembled was purchased for this truly laudable and christian purpose, and fitted up as you now see it, under the direction of an experienced sailor and able shipwright, whose regard for the cause prompted him to afford his superintendence gratuitously. The chapel was opened for divine service in May, 1818, and has been most successful in attracting large and attentive congregations of British seamen. An undertaking at once so novel and so interesting, was sure to engage attention and secure support. Individuals of rank and influence, and public companies of great national importance, embarked their hearts and good wishes in this new adventure. Amongst the former must be mentioned the names of Lords Gambier and

Exmouth, Mr. Wilberforce, and Mr. Angerstein; and the more illustrious name of Prince Leopold, who not only attended yesterday at the anniversary with heartfelt delight, but presented a contribution of twenty guineas. The Bank of England and the East India Company have given each one hundred pounds; and the West India Dock Company thirty guineas. Fine proofs these, that British merchants are alive, amidst the pursuits of commerce, to the moral improvement of their country, and that the genius of commerce may yet become a ministering spirit to the heirs of salvation. The example thus exhibited in London, has been imitated at Bristol, Liverpool, Greenock, Leith; at each of which places Societies have been formed for the religious benefit of seamen.

America, always ready to imitate British benevolence, has entered into the scheme, and places of worship have been opened in several transatlantic cities expressly for the use of sailors and their families, the effect of which is thus stated by the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church, convened at Philadelphia, in a report of the state of religion within their limits:—"The result of the efforts for the religious improvement of the sailors is gratifying beyond the most sanguine expectations. Not only have these long-neglected men shown themselves sensible of the worth of christian remembrance, and willing to attend public ordinances (a privilege from which they thought themselves excluded by their dress and appearance), but they have listened with deep earnestness to the word preached to them; tears have flowed over their hardy cheeks, and hearts which no hardships could move, nor storms appal, have been broken and melted under the gospel's gentle voice.

The gratitude and affection they manifest towards their religious teachers, and the solicitude they evince for farther instruction, and an interest in the prayers of christian people, are truly affecting, and pungently rebuke the lukewarmness and apathy of those who are better taught and more highly favoured. The effect upon their moral habits is immediate and striking, and has drawn expressions of the utmost astonishment from their employers. The assembly would suggest whether these men might not be made of essential use in the diffusion of the sacred Scriptures through the world, and the furtherance of the missionary cause."

Thus widely is this engaging object of religious benevolence attracting attention and receiving support, and it is at once to be desired and expected that the cause should advance till there is not a port in any part of the world under the dominion of avowed Christians, but shall have its chapel for the use of seamen. How deeply are we indebted to these generous and heroic men! When we have been reposing in security on our beds and listening carelessly to the howling of the tempest, they have been braving all its fury on the billows of the ocean, to procure for us the comforts and the luxuries of life. But for their undaunted courage in the time of warfare and of peril, we had, long ere this, been obliged to contend for our national existence upon our own shores, and there maintain the doubtful strife with the mightiest foe that ever envied our greatness. When the dread of invasion circulated a thousand terrors through the land, we thought of the wooden walls which God had raised for our defence, by which we hoped he would protect us, and kept our hearts in peace. And, now, what return shall we make to our

gallant defenders? Leave them to their sins and the perdition which follows? Forbid it gratitude! No men need our help more, for none amidst all their heroic qualities appear to be more destitute of a just sense of religion. Their distance from the means of grace, when at sea, should make us specially anxious to provide them with religious instruction on their arrival in port. This can only be done by a chapel appropriated to their use: from all others they believe that they are excluded. Neither the sound of the church-going bell, nor the open doors of the sanctuary, are regarded as any invitation to them: they see the congregation hastening to appear before God in Zion, but no voice ever says to them, "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord." How much do they need the consolation of religion to soften the pang of separation, when they leave their native country and their families, never, probably, to retnrn; to cheer them amidst the sad remembrances of their home, when oceans roll between them and their own fireside; to calm them amidst the terrors of the storm, and prepare them for the horrors of the wreck! And here they are taught the source of these divine and holy comforts. Who can look round on the scene now before us, without emotions of the most sublime and blissful nature? It was predicted in ancient prophecy that a time should arrive when the instruments of war should be converted into the implements of husbandry. This day (if we substitute spiritual husbandry for that which is earthly) is this scripture fulfilled before our eyes. What to the people of God, of other times, was matter of faith, is become to us the object of sense and matter of fact. The chapel in which we now float upon the Thames, was once a vessel of war.

What a transformation! What a change of purpose! What an alteration of scene! No longer does she quit the British shore breathing out threatening and slaughter against the inhabitants of other countries, but remains the minister of mercy to our own. Instead of her decks being a stage for the dreadful tragedy of war, they have become a scene where, in some measure, it may be said that all the air is love, and all the region peace. Here every sabbath are beheld our sailors, not marshalled in the array of battle, wielding the weapons of destruction and infuriated with rage, but ranged in order to hear the word of life, using the sword of the Spirit for the destruction of their sins, and receiving, with saving faith, a spirit of charity to all mankind. The thunder of cannon has been hushed for the still small voice of the gospel to be heard, and the lightning flash of artillery has been quenched for the calm and holy light of the Spirit to shine in upon the human mind. The gracious invitation of heaven's messenger succeeds to the stern command of earth's warrior. No blood now flows here but that of atonement; no groan is heard but that of penitence; no wounds are inflicted but those of the Spirit. Again we must exclaim, What a transformation! What a change of purpose! What an alteration of scene! Who needs to be exhorted to benevolence in such a cause? especially when informed that the objects of our mercy most eagerly avail themselves of the means provided for their relief. More than sixty boats have been seen round this floating chapel at the same time, waiting to convey their crews from the solemnities of public worship to their respective vessels! Six hundred sailors have been beheld at the same moment listening to the glad tidings of salvation.

This is a new sight in the christian world, over which angels must hover with delight, as more interesting in their eyes than the mausoleum in which are deposited the remains of Nelson. Who can calculate how often the joyful news of souls renewed and sins forgiven, has been already borne from this spot to heaven by the swift winged messengers of light, or what practical results may yet issue from this ingenious device of mercy?

Let the committee be encouraged from what they have already seen, to go forward in their labour of love. Let them not despise the day of small things in the case of any of the sailors whom it may please the Father of mercies to bring under serious impression and religious concern. Let them look out for such instances, for such may be confidently expected; and having found them, let them nurture these beginnings of good things with a solicitude in some measure proportioned to the importance which attaches to the salvation of souls. And may each returning anniversary bring with it fresh proofs of success, which shall be felt by all the friends of this deeply interesting Society as rich rewards for past exertions, and new motives to future diligence.

THE CHARACTER AND REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL MINISTER.

A SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE LATE REV. JOHN BERRY,

PREACHED IN

CARRS LANE MEETING HOUSE, BIRMINGHAM,

MARCH 25, 1821.

It may not be uninteresting to some to know that the subject of the following sermon was descended from James Berry, one of the Major-Generals and Lords of the Protectorate, by a daughter of Sir Charles Wolsley, and granddaughter of the first Viscount Saye and Sele, founder, with Lord Brook, of Saybrook, in Connecticut. He had considerable influence with the army, and was the chief actor in dethroning Richard Cromwell (an act which he lived to lament), and accordingly was of the four Commonwealth's-men whom Monk was most anxious to secure on the restoration of the Stuarts. He was long confined in Scarborough Castle, but not having been one of the King's judges, was at length set at liberty. He introduced Richard Baxter into the ministry, but lost his favour by becoming an Independent.

The author knew six generations of the Major-General's descendants, who have ever upheld the character of one of the godly families of the Commonwealth. It is now worthily represented in Birmingham by Mr Samuel Berry, the well-known surgeon, who holds his father's and great grandfather's office of deacon of Carrs Lane Church, of which his grandfather was, as we shall see, a minister.

1 Peter v, 4.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

No circumstance has contributed so much to the rise and progress of infidelity as abuses in the Christian ministry. When, instead of the holy, spiritual, humble, laborious pastors of the apostolic age, were seen the proud, ambitious, avaricious and domineering ecclesiastics of succeeding centuries, it is not to be wondered at that men of corrupt minds, who were looking round for objections to the truth as it is in Jesus, should find one so near at hand and so specious, as the vices of its ministers; and without stopping to enquire whether this was the necessary consequence, or the wicked corruption of Christianity, should resolve the whole into priestcraft and imposture. Infidelity, if not actually generated by the sins of ministers, has been fed by them, and by the retributive justice of God they have been doomed to suffer most from its venom, since against them have been chiefly directed the attacks of its ridicule, malignity, and sarcasm. How much anxiety, then, should be felt by all who bear the sacred office, to exhibit it in its native simplicity, spirituality, and benevolence; and with what eagerness should we

avail ourselves of every opportunity to exhibit to the public eye the character of those who have the testimony both of their own consciences and of others, "that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world." Such an opportunity Divine Providence has furnished us this day by the removal of the Rev. John Berry, whose life was an exemplification of St. Peter's directions in the context, and whose death conducted him to the glorious reward so beautifully described in the text. As I shall enter pretty much at length into the context, it may possibly be thought by some that such a passage is more suited for an ordination charge, than a funeral discourse. But what, I ask, are sermons for the dead, when properly conducted, but charges to the living; charges delivered not so much from the pulpit as from the tomb; not so much by men of like passions with ourselves, as by viewless monitors who address us from the world of spirits. I wish to day to preach to myself, and I am sure that the sons of our deceased friend, who sustain the ministerial character,* will not think this an untimely discussion of such a subject, as it comes home to their hearts enforced not only by the weight of divine authority, but by the remembrance of his living example.

I. I shall describe the nature, qualifications, and duties of the ministerial office, as stated in the context. "The elders which are among you, I exhort," said the apostle in the first verse. The term "elder" was primarily addressed to persons of advanced years; but

* Of whom there were three present, (see afterwards,) besides several other ministers.

by an easy transition it was applied as a title of esteem and dignity to those who, whatever their age, were eminent for the qualities usually looked for in declining life; and eventually it became a term of office, and was the appellation of those who filled any station of importance, it being assumed that they would be eminent either for years or wisdom. It is one of the terms by which the ministers of the gospel are designated, for the reason last assigned. But they are also denominated bishops: "Feed the flock, taking the oversight* thereof," or, "acting the part of bishops towards them." By implication they are also designated pastors or shepherds. The first term is a title of dignity, the second describes their duty as appointed to overlook the church, and the third conveys the same meaning as the second, expressing it by a figure taken from rural affairs. It is this last view of the ministerial office, which I shall now illustrate, by setting forth the qualifications and duties of the pastoral character.

The flock which is committed to their care is the Church of God, which is thus denominated to teach us that believers are the special property of Christ, which he owns, loves, and protects, in distinction from the wicked (who, in comparison with the righteous, are a kind of wild beasts in whom he has neither peculiar property nor pleasure), and are thus denominated also to teach us that Christians are not to live solitarily and unconnected, but are to unite themselves with each other in visible communion and brotherly love, and are

* Episcopountes. It is an unanswerable argument that the words bishops, elders, and pastors, mean precisely the same officers; that in this passage, as well as in Acts xx, 17—28, they are all applied to the same persons.

to submit to the guidance and directions of their great Shepherd, and in all things to manifest the simplicity, harmlessness, and innocence of which the sheep is the natural emblem.

1. I shall consider the duties which this figurative description of the pastoral office implies. It is incumbent on a Christian shepherd to feed the flock. This is expressly enjoined by St. Peter, who, in such admonition, does but echo the thrice repeated injunction addressed to himself by his risen Lord. The principal part of a shepherd's duty is to provide food for the sheep. In summer you will see him conducting them to the verdant pasture; and in winter, when the snow has covered the herbage, or the frost has withered it, you will behold him supplying them with fodder, anxious and laborious to satisfy their craving appetite with plentiful and suitable supplies. Such is the beautiful and instructive emblem by which the christian shepherd is taught his duty, and admonished to perform it. And what is the provision with which he is to feed them? Food for the mind and heart, suited to their condition as rational beings, as fallen sinners, and as immortal creatures, the truth as it is in Jesus. He is not to offer them the mere flowers of rhetoric, or the dry husks of criticism, or the thorns of controversy, but "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness," whereby they may be nourished in faith, righteousness, hope and love, to everlasting life. He is to spread before them the whole counsel of God, and to keep nothing back which is profitable for them. The doctrines are to be explained and proved, the duties stated and enforced. In the corrupt phraseology of

some misguided Christians, the term food is restricted to the doctrinal parts of divine revelation, whilst the duties of religion, however evangelically they may be treated by the minister, are regarded in the light of useless chaff. But where, we would be glad to know, is such restriction of the term to be found in the Word of God. There we are taught that all which God has revealed as truth is food for the soul, whether in the way of fact, of doctrine, or of duty. That Christian is fed, in the best sense of the term, who has his filial fear excited, his love kindled, and his zeal quickened, whether it be by promise, or by threatening, or by precept. To provide this food is one of the chief anxieties of a Christian pastor. He will not, if he be worthy of his name and office, scatter before them the mere common-place thoughts of a superficial theology, which he has innumerable times previously repeated to them. That would be to gather up and spread again before the flock fodder which they had often refused and trampled upon before. He will study the sacred Scriptures in his closet, and give himself to reading, meditation, and all sacred learning. He will ever labour to gain clearer, and more enlarged, and more affecting views of divine truth, that he may lead his people onward in the path of understanding. He will not be satisfied merely to get through his sermons in any manner, and feel himself sufficiently rewarded by escaping the language of complaint, but will mourn as having laboured in vain till he sees them growing in grace, and in the knowledge of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Inspection of the state of the flock is another duty implied in this elegant figure. A shepherd examines

into the condition of the sheep, and adapts his conduct to each individual case. It is a beautiful description which the Divine Pastor gives of his own conduct, and it should be imitated by every one of his servants. "I will feed my flock, and cause them to lie down. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." Yes, we should know the circumstances of our people, the sorrows which oppress them, the cares which perplex them, the sins which beset them, the temptations which assail them, and the difficulties which embarrass them, in order that we may give to each "a portion of meat in due season." The pulpit should not be the only scene of our labours, but uniting the pastor with the preacher we should ascertain exactly, either by our own personal examination or by the aid of competent assistants, the character and circumstances of each member of the flock. There are peculiar cases, which require peculiar treatment. This part of our duty, I am aware, is very difficult in the present age of the church, but ought not to be neglected.* Duties cannot be in oppo-

* In large towns, where the sphere of a minister's duty is wide, and he, from peculiar circumstances, is necessarily much from home, the liberality of the church should provide him, or enable him to provide himself, with a suitable assistant to bear a part of the burden of pastoral and ministerial cares. Unhappily this has not always been found to be practicable on other grounds than those of pecuniary difficulty. There are, however, four cases in Birmingham at this moment where the plan is successfully acted upon. [The ministers so associated, in addition to those at Carrs Lane Chapel, were, at Ebenezer Chapel, the Rev. T. East and the Rev.— Williams; at the Old Meeting, the Rev. R. Kell and the Rev. S. W. Browne; and at the New Meeting, the Rev. J. Kentish and the Rev. J. Yates.]

Let not this be thought the plea of indolence.

sition to each other, and therefore no man can be under any obligation to go so much from home, even in the cause of religion, as necessarily to interfere with the claims of his own flock. I am sure that more is expected in this respect, from many ministers, than they either can or ought to render.

Protection of his flock is also the duty of a shepherd. In eastern countries, where wild beasts abound, it often requires no small share of courage and resolution to defend the sheep against their attacks. David informs us that in the course of his pastoral duties he slew a lion and a bear which came to assail his fleecy charge. And are there no enemies prowling round the fold of Christ, against which it is necessary for the christian shepherd to guard his flock? Is not Satan perpetually going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? Is not the spirit of the world ever watching for an opportunity to enter and devastate the interests of piety in our churches? Are there not heresies ever lurking about the pastures of truth? Against all these it is incumbent on the ministers of the gospel to employ the eye of vigilance and the arm of authority. Our Saviour himself warned his first ministers against some, who though inwardly they were ravenous wolves, yet, under the guise of sheep's clothing, would gain access to the flock. There are cases in which it requires no ordinary courage to arrest and expel these mischievous intruders. To stop the progress of the antinomian heresy which in modern times has desolated so many churches; to resist the influence of some powerful or worldly-minded professor; or to curb the ambition of some rising Diotrephes, who is perpetually making encroachments on the liberty both of the pastor and

people, requires a degree of boldness not always possessed by the ministers of the gospel. A temporising policy has sometimes been resorted to for the sake of peace, but it has only given the mischief more time and more scope for operation. I admit that great prudence and mildness are necessary in such cases, but they should be combined with great firmness.

Affectionate tenderness is generally associated with the character of a shepherd. The description of our great Redeemer given by the evangelical prophet has always been admired. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." And this, in measure, is the character of every consistent minister of Christ. It is but a very small part of the minister's character which you see in the pulpit. You may there behold the beamings of holy affection in his eye, and hear the breathings of tenderness from his lips; but the solicitude which oppresses his heart, and the love that glows in his bosom, which neither time can diminish nor injury destroy; which lead him to weep over your failings, and smile upon the budding excellences of your character; and which, could he serve you in no other way, would render him willing to be offered upon the service and sacrifice of your faith; these you cannot know. He bears upon his heart the burden of all your interests, and is indifferent to nothing that concerns you. Even in temporal affairs he sympathises with all your joys and sorrows, but he concentrates his solicitude in what relates to your souls. His ear is ever open to the voice of your enquiries and complaints; he will try to soothe your sorrows, hush your alarms, scatter your fears, guide

your feet, and "being affectionately desirous of you, he will be gentle amongst you even as a nurse cherisheth her children."

A faithful minister will enforce all his instructions by his example. In eastern countries shepherds do not drive the flock before them as ours do, but go before the sheep, and allure them onward by their well-known voice. Hence the Psalmist says in that beautiful pastoral ode, the twenty-third Psalm: "He leadeth me," not driveth me, "beside the still waters." What force and beauty does this fact give to our Lord's own language, "The sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out; and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice." The necessity of a holy example in the teacher of religion is strongly implied even in the negative part of the injunction, "neither as being lords over God's heritage." To enjoin others to do what we refuse to do ourselves would be to treat our people as slaves or servants, who are commanded to perform services from which their masters are exempt. To submit to the same obligations both in faith and practice which we enforce upon the people, to mind the same thing, to walk by the same rule as we lay down for them, is the only way in which we can come up to the spirit of this injunction. We are to be "examples to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Instead of lagging behind in these things, our proper place is before the flock. We should not be satisfied with the same religious attainments as our hearers, but should strive to excel them. Defects and failings which would be unnoticed in them, will be instantly observed in us.

If obscurity be a privilege, we have disfranchised ourselves of this. Our congregations treat our excellences and our failings with a different measure; having surveyed the latter by a magnifying power, they look at the former through a lens which diminishes the object; and for this reason, because they expect from us more good and less evil than from the rest of the world. They expect to see our descriptions of piety copied into our own conduct, and happy the man who having set forth true godliness in his discourses, in all its beautiful proportions and all its glowing colours, shall constrain the audience to exclaim, "The painter has delineated his own likeness." Happy the man who, when the people shall ask, "What is religion?" shall be not only able to reply in reference to his pulpit, "Come and hear," but in reference to his life, "Come and see." He only is an honour to his office, or is honoured by it, who lives the gospel which he preaches, and adorns by his conduct the doctrines which he believes. But the unholy minister of religion is a disgrace to Christianity and the worst enemy of his species. He is the most powerful abettor of infidelity, and does more to wither the moral interests of mankind than the most malignant and pestiferous treatises that ever issued from the press. If he perished alone in his sins, our feelings might be those of unmingled pity; but when we view him ruining the souls of others by his example, we unite abhorrence with our compassion, just as we should at the conduct of the shepherd who first drove his flock over a precipice and then dashed himself upon the rocks below. And even where the misconduct does not amount to vice, how many hinder the salutary effect of their preaching by inconsistencies unworthy of the

Christian, much more of the Christian minister. Such men resemble not the lighthouse, which hangs out its beaming signal to warn the tempest-tossed sailor of his danger and guide him in safety on his course; but the wandering and delusive fires, which mislead the unwary traveller to engulph him in the marsh. We are too apt to lose sight of moral blemishes when they are accompanied by the splendour of brilliant powers of mind; beholding some men, like the angel standing in the sun, enveloped in the blaze of their talents, we feel inclined to make or admit on their behalf excuses which would not be entertained in behalf of persons of inferior abilities. I know of nothing more dangerous to the interests of true piety than that idolatry of talent which resembles the superstitions of the old heathens who worshipped gods suited to their own tastes or pursuits without any heed of the vices ascribed to them.

In the present day, when the active virtues of Christianity are called forth into such constant and vigorous exercise, and when a minister is thought, and justly thought, behind the spirit of his time, if he stands aloof from schemes of public usefulness, it is very probable that the value of the pure, and mild, and passive graces may be underrated. If the former are necessary for converting the heathen abroad, the latter are equally necessary for rebuking the spirit of infidelity at home. I contend that these two classes of excellence are by no means incompatible with each other; so far from it, the grandest elevation of human character to which any man can attain, is to unite the ardour of zeal with the purity of holiness, and public spirit with personal religion; and he is the first of his species, because most like the Redeemer of the world, who causes his zeal to

rise upon mankind with the blaze and benefits of the sun, and at the same time makes the influence of his holy example to descend upon them, silent, pure, and penetrating as the dew.

2. The apostle states in a negative form the manner in which the duties of the pastoral office are to be entered upon and discharged. A minister is not to take upon him the oversight of a flock under constraint, but with a willing mind. This had a particular reference to the state of things during the apostolic age. The demon of persecution had recently risen from the bottomless pit like the beast in the apocalypse ascending from the sea, "to whom it was given to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." At such a time the pastors of the churches were the first objects of attack, in order that the shepherds being seized, the flocks might be scattered with greater ease. Under these circumstances it was difficult to persuade some who were eminently qualified for the pastoral office to undertake its duties, and when prevailed upon to accept the charge of souls, they would do so with reluctant and unwilling minds. To check this spirit of cowardice the apostle admonished them not to shrink from the post of danger, nor to occupy it upon compulsion, but cheerfully to undertake its arduous functions. At the present day the danger is not the same in reference to entrance upon the pastoral office; many are now too ready, and run before they are sent; but many, having entered the office, perform its duties unwillingly. They go to their studies as men who are dragged to prison; the work of preparing for the pulpit is disgusting drudgery, and even the high employment of preaching the Gospel is a weariness of which they constantly complain. They are

in office, and they must remain there, and they act only under the compulsion of this necessity. Every thing withers under their hands; they benumb every interest which they touch. The flock wander from a shepherd who does nothing for them except by constraint, till he can almost say, "I alone am left." Oh for more of that ready mind, that being instant in season and out of season to preach the word, to visit the sick, to instruct the ignorant, which shall look as if we felt the value of souls, were anticipating the approach of eternity, and had our eye fixed on the solemnities of the judgment day.

We are forbidden to take the oversight of the flock for the sake of filthy lucre. The love of money will impel men to do all things which are evil; it has led to the neglect of every duty, and the perpetration of every crime: it has steeled the heart against all the claims of humanity, and gratitude, and justice, and affection; it has transformed men into beasts and fiends; but the very climax of its guilt, its mischief, and its punishment, will be found in that man who undertakes the ministry of the word and the care of souls from no higher motive than pecuniary advantage. And yet what crowds, with hands unclean, and hearts unsanctified, rush to the altar, merely "to eat the fat and drink the sweet," unawed by the voice which is ever crying, "Off, off, ye profane." It is true that the candidates for dissenting pulpits, who see no splendid dignities, no rich emoluments, no ecclesiastical distinctions to which they can attain, and have no possibility of preferments sufficient to gratify avarice or ambition, are far less in danger of this evil than those who labour within a communion where a graduated scale of rank and emolument,

extending from the archiepiscopal palace down to the vicarage, is presented to the eye of every one who looks towards the church; still, amongst us there are some, it is to be feared, who, having tasted the bread of idleness love it so well as to exclaim, "Evermore give us this bread." Such a man, too indolent to work, and foolishly considering that the ministry is an easy mode of life, steals into the priest's office for a morsel of bread. Contemptible creature! Considerate men esteem him a dead weight on the community. His God despises him, and throws him his morsel by the hands of an ignorant people. The night comes on, and all is dark and dismal. He has had his reward; it is all spent, and not a drop of water remains for a vast eternity. Unhappy man! he took upon him the care of other men's souls, when he knew not how to take care of his own.

A christian minister is not to lord it over God's heritage.* He has no dominion over the conscience; no power resides in him to enjoin any thing in the way of faith or practice. He is a ruler, but it is for Christ; he is to enjoin, but it is in the name of Jesus. His power in the church is ministerial, not legislatorial. He is to assume no haughty airs, no official pride, but to

* The original term is cleros, or clergy, and affords in its modern acceptation a striking instance of the perversion of language. Nothing can be more indisputable than that St. Peter here applies it to the flock, in contradistinction to the shepherd. The people are here called God's clergy, that is, his lot, portion, or inheritance, in allusion to the division of the land of Canaan amongst the children of Israel by lot. No countenance for appropriating this word to the ministers of the Gospel can be derived even from the Old Testament; for the tribe of Levi, whose privileges in many things are considered as the prototypes of ministerial prerogatives, are no where called God's cleros, or

conduct himself amidst the people of his charge with all humility, deriving all his dignity from the purity of his character, and the sublimity of his employment. Such is the view St. Peter gives of the office and duties of a christian pastor.

II. I shall consider his subordination and responsibility to Christ. These are implied in the expression, "the Chief Shepherd." It is needless to say that this refers to our divine Lord. Under the figure of a shepherd he was predicted by prophets, represented by apostles, and at great length described by Himself. An adjective of distinction is, however, generally applied to him, and he is called "the great," "the good," "the chief Shepherd."

This latter epithet which is given to him in the text implies, 1. His superiority to all others. They are mere men of the same nature as their flocks; he in his mysterious and complex person unites the uncreated glories of the Godhead with the milder beauties of the perfect man. They (in a good sense of the term) are hired pastors; he is the great proprietor of the sheep, whom he purchased from divine justice by the ransom of his blood, and rescued from the dominion of Satan by the power of his arm. They partake of the infir-

clergy, though that expression is frequently applied to the whole nation. Moses, in an address to God, uses this language, "They are thy people and thine inheritance." Deut. ix, 29. The words in the Septuagint are "laos sou kai cleros sou." The same persons are in the same sentence called both clergy and laity. So also St. Peter calls the church in one verse the flock, and in another the clergy. It is somewhat extraordinary, says Dr. Campbell, that in the choice of distinctions, which the church rulers so soon showed a disposition to affect, they should have paid almost as little attention to the style as they did to the spirit and meaning of the sacred books.

mities of the people; he is holy, harmless, and undefiled. They are encompassed with ignorance, and with the best intentions often err in the direction of the church. Unerring wisdom characterises all his dispensations towards the church, and then is he most wise (if comparison may be instituted) when most mysterious. They, even when most particular in their attention, may overlook some members of their flock, and be unacquainted with the concerns of many whom they may wish to know; he, by his attributes of omnipresence and omniscience, is near to every one, and knows as accurately the state of all, and exercises as tender a care over each, as if one single lamb were the sole and exclusive object of his pastoral attention. They possess affection for their flock, but the warmest bosom that ever glowed with ministerial love, is as the frigid zone itself compared with the love of his heart. They are weak, and are often ready to sink under the multiplied cares of office; but though the government is upon his shoulder, he fainteth not, neither is weary, for "He is the Alpha and Omega, the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." They are mortal, and continue not by reason of death; he is the "blessed and only potentate, who only hath immortality," and reigns, as Head over all things to his church, not "by the law of a carnal commandment, but by the power of an endless life." Death has access to our pulpits, but not to his throne. He maintains his church amidst the ravages of death, and though his flocks die, and the shepherds die with them, he raises up other sheep to occupy the folds, and other shepherds to feed and watch them. It is in this sense (as some think) we are to understand his own language, "Upon this rock will I

build my church, and the gates of hell* shall not prevail against it." The gates of the unseen world were thrown open by the hand which plucked the forbidden fruit, and have been kept open ever since by the justice of God. Not only have the wicked passed through those gloomy portals, but every generation of the righteous. Millions of saints have passed the awful barrier, with myriads of faithful holy ministers, but still others have been raised up in their place, and the church still continues through the power of her deathless Lord. Her boast and her joy amidst the ravages of death, is in his language, "I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of the unseen world."

2. This epithet implies the authority of Christ. He, in this respect, is the chief Shepherd. "All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and he is head over all things to his church." Any dominion over his church which is either independent of his, or opposed to it, whether it is civil or ecclesiastical, is clearly a rebellious invasion of his sublime and inalienable prerogative. It is exclusively his right to rule in the church, to regulate all its concerns, and all its officers. He calls the under shepherds to their office, furnishes them with their intellectual and spiritual qualifications, assists them in their duties, selects for them their stations, blesses their ministrations, and will at last gather them round his bar to account for their conduct. Yes; for all the talents he has entrusted to their care, for all the opportunities of usefulness he has put within their reach; for all they have done and all they might

* The word in the original, Hades, signifying the unseen world, of which, according to this interpretation, death is the gate.

have done; for their acts and their motives; for every hour of their time and every particle of their influence; for their Sabbaths and their sermons, must they render to Christ at the last day an exact and correct account. No distinctions either of talents or success will raise them above the scrutiny; no obscurity of station or feebleness of intellect will depress them below it. The shepherd and the flock must confront each other before the tribunal of the universal Judge; they to testify how he preached, and he to testify how they heard. O thou great and merciful Saviour, who wilt then lay aside the amiable character of the shepherd for the awful one of the judge, grant us that we may find mercy of thee in that day. Then, when our conduct shall come under review, and even the motives of it shall be scrutinised,

> "Cleans'd in thine own all-purifying blood,
> Forgive the evil, and accept the good."

III. Turn we now to contemplate the faithful minister's glorious reward.

1. The reward will be bestowed when the chief Shepherd shall appear. Jesus Christ was once an inhabitant of our world. "The word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us," but having finished the work which required his personal appearance, having, like the high priest of the Jews, offered oblation for the sins of the people, "he entered, by his own blood, within the veil to appear in the presence of God for us." Since his ascension to glory he has carried on his cause by the operations of providence, the influence of grace, and the dependent agency of man, but He himself is invisible. The whole fabric of practical Christianity is built upon the principle of faith; we believe in him whom we have not seen; and how will it redound to the glory of his

wisdom and power, that notwithstanding the human race are so unwilling in most things to follow any other guide than the testimony of their senses, millions of them should be enabled by the operation of faith to make things unseen predominate over things seen, things future over things present, things eternal over things temporal, and in expectation of a world which none of them have ever seen, and which they knew only from the writings of men who lived nearly two thousand years ago, to resist the fascinations which surround them, and mortify the propensities inherent in their own hearts. Think what a triumph of faith is exhibited, when, out of love to an unseen Saviour, men to whom life presents all its attractions, and death all its terrors, should be willing to die upon the scaffold or at the stake. But the Son of God will not always be invisible: "He shall appear." The veil of the material heavens will be drawn aside, and he who now makes intercession for us, shall be seen, like his illustrious type, clad in his beautiful garments, returning from the most holy place to bless the people in the name of Jehovah. He shall not come in humiliation, as he did when his business was to redeem the world; but he shall be manifested in glory befitting the judge of the universe, and appear as "the Great God and our Saviour." It is not for us even to imagine the splendour of that appearance, which is expressly called the revelation of Jesus Christ. Who can form an idea of a being exhibiting as well as possessing the mingled glories of deity and humanity? or of that union of awful justice and ineffable love which will then be visibly enthroned on his brow? or of that concentration of majesty which is implied in his coming in his own glory, and the glory of his Father,

and the glory of his holy angels? or of the sights and the sounds which shall attend his descent from heaven, and announce his approach to our flaming world? The present defects of our knowledge will, however, be supplied by the testimony of our senses, for when "he cometh in the clouds every eye shall see him." It is at this time, it is amidst these circumstances, that the reward of the faithful minister will be bestowed. Marks of favours conferred by a king in private are valued by every loyal subject; but to be singled out on a court day, to be applauded at a levee, and to receive an honourable distinction before all the rank and nobility of a kingdom, enhances, beyond calculation, the value of the favour. The minister, and indeed the Christian, no sooner quits the body than he enters into the presence of Christ, and receives, as it were, a private testimony of his approbation: but this is not all. At the judgment day, when the chief Shepherd shall appear upon the throne of his glory; when all of the earth, with all their monarchs, legislators, philosophers, and warriors, shall be around his footstool; when thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, shall surround the seat of the eternal majesty, and the cherubim and seraphim shall gaze upon the scene; then, to be singled out and proclaimed as the man whom the King of the universe delights to honour, will be a joy and a glory which no language can enable us ever to comprehend.

2. But I must consider of what the reward is to consist. "He shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away." The ancients rewarded those who conquered either in their battles or their games, with crowns or garlands composed of the leaves of trees and herbs. These were of course but of short continuance, and

withered, if not in the hand that bestowed them, upon the brows that received them. In allusion to this it is that the apostle speaks when he says, "they do it to receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible (amaranthine) one." On some occasions the crowns were composed of a flower which, because it retained its beauty for a long time, was called amaranthus (or incorruptible), and was, on that account, chosen by poets as the emblem of immortality. Amaranthine crowns were not unfrequently presented as votive offerings to departed heroes; and it is probably in allusion to this circumstance also that the christian minister is said to receive an amaranthine crown. The figure implies honorable distinction. The crown was an emblem of honour; and to be crowned with glory is, perhaps, the most expressive phrase which language contains. The faithful pastor will no doubt be singled out amidst the solemnities of the last day, and occupy a station where every eye will behold him. He will receive a public testimony of approbation from the Chief Shepherd. With amazing condescension the Lord Jesus will recite all the acts of service which he has performed, proclaim before the universe that he was faithful until death, and finish the whole by saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" or to give this passage, as an ancient version beautifully paraphrases it, "The owner of the money received him pleasantly, and uttered words that were grateful to his heart, saying, 'Well done, O thou good and faithful servant.'" Tell me what higher honour, what richer bliss can be conferred on any rational being, than to hear the Lord of heaven and earth say publicly to him, "Well done, I am pleased with thy services; thou hast found grace in

my sight." The hero who has fought England's battles, and subdued her enemies, delights in the acclamations of the multitude, and contemplates with pleasure the wealth and titles which he has won; but the proudest moment of his life, the meridian of his glory is, when he stands before the parliament of his country, when its members receive him standing, and the august president, in the name of the house and the nation, pronounces, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." But O, what is this compared with the honour and distinction of that man, who shall stand before the bar of the universe, and hear the King of kings and Lord of lords say to him, "Well done, well done." The very anticipation almost overwhelms us. No wonder St. Peter thought nothing of living or dying, but had all his solicitude drawn to the one point of being accepted by Jesus Christ; no wonder the countenance of Cain fell when he went out from the presence of the Lord, or that despair marked every step of the rejected anger-smitten fugitive.

As we have every reason from Scripture to believe that there are degrees of glory in the celestial world, we may safely conclude that they who have been most useful in the cause of Christ on earth will be nearest his throne in heaven. This is another part of their honour. "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." And the distinctions of that world will be borne without pride, and be seen without envy.

Perfect felicity is evidently implied in this figurative description of a minister's reward. The crown of victory was worn on days of public rejoicing, and he who wore it was considered the happiest of the festive throng, and

the centre of the universal joy. He received the congratulations of the admiring multitude as having reached the summit of human happiness. The apostle, therefore, intended to include the idea of perfect happiness in his beautiful allusion. The holy pastor shall partake, in common with his people, of all those sublime felicities which the Father hath prepared for them that love him. He shall see God face to face, and behold the glory of the Lamb; he shall possess a body glorious, incorruptible, and inhabited by a spirit perfect in knowledge, holiness, and love; he shall be associated with the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect.

But, in addition, he shall have sources of felicity peculiar to his office. The consciousness of having spent his life in the service of Christ; of having stood, as it were, at the fountain of celestial radiance for so many years, to pour the streams of truth and holiness over the parched plains of this desert world; of having made known the glory of God to those who but for his instrumentality, must have remained in ignorance of his nature; of having scattered along his path to immortality the unsearchable riches of Christ, and sown the seed of righteousness for an eternal harvest; of having rescued many from everlasting death, and elevated them to the life that never ends; in short, of having been instrumental in accomplishing the lofty schemes of redeeming love, and lived in fellowship with the cross, such a reflection, when all the acquirements of ambition, of learning, of science, or of avarice, shall cease to be regarded with complacency, will be a perennial spring of ineffable delight in the bosom of its possessor. It will be no small accession to the faithful pastor's felicity

to see around him in heaven the souls whom he was the honoured instrument of bringing to glory, the saints whom his labours prepared for their inheritance in light. How striking is the language which the apostle addressed to the believers in Thessalonica; "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? Ye are our glory and joy." Those of you who have tasted the rich emotions which benevolence excites in the bosom of the philanthropist, can conceive with what delight you would gaze upon a large company seated round your own table, all of whom owe their comfort in life to your exertions. But such a survey would be infinitely less gratifying than will be that of the minister of Christ, who, while he shall look around upon immortal souls, rescued from hell, and elevated to heaven by his instrumentality, shall hear them uttering his name in the excess of their rapture, as the means of their salvation, and shall behold them turning upon him eyes expressive at once of their glory and their gratitude.

The hope of usefulness is the noblest stimulus to exertion, and the evidence of it is our richest reward. It is beyond expression delightful to behold the profligate reclaimed, reformed, and sanctified, and to see those who were hastening to the bottomless pit, and becoming every day more fit for it, transformed by the blessing of God upon our ministry, into humble, holy, spiritual followers of the Lamb. There is not a man on earth whom a minister can envy when he beholds around him those whom he has been the instrument of saving from death. Still it is with mingled feelings that we look upon these pleasing indications of successful labour. Many a vernal blossom is now putting forth its petals to

the sun, which shall never ripen into fruit; and we have so often seen such nipped by the frost and scattered by the wind, that even when the garden of the Lord puts on the most encouraging aspect, and most invites to gratitude and delight, we rejoice indeed, for even the hope of doing good is blissful, but recollecting how frail human goodness is, "we rejoice with trembling." The flow of our joy is often checked by the foreboding that some of our apparently most beautiful plants will never bloom in the paradise above. For experience makes us incredulous and suspicious. But none of these suspicions will arise to interrupt our felicity above. There, the good we have done shall be permanent, shall be eternal. We shall see those sermons and those prayers, which we thought were utterly lost, obtain their reward in the glorified forms of redeemed sinners. We shall see the seed which we sowed oftentimes amidst many tears, waving in a rich harvest of everlasting joy. And we shall survey the scene with unmingled feelings. No appearances of piety will be delusive there. Never shall we sorrowfully exclaim over any one, "Thy goodness is as the morning cloud and early dew." The souls whom we there shall behold elevated to glory through our ministry will never deceive us; no inconsistency will ever awaken our fears or grieve our hearts; none will be seen falling like meteors of the church, but every one will present the settled splendour of a fixed star. Who can conceive of that delight which will arise from such a scene? What an incentive to our labour! What an excitement to our zeal! The mere plaudits of men expire upon the vibrations that bear them to the ear. Miserable is the man who is satisfied with the admiration instead of the salvation of his hearers, and

wretched for ever will he be when he shall hear the Judge say to him, "Thou hast had thy reward."

Eternal duration is ascribed by the Apostle to the honour and happiness promised in the text. The garland of the victor soon withered; the amaranthine chaplet of the hero, in spite of its name, lost its beauty; the diadem falls from the brow of the monarch; but the pastor's crown shall "never fade away." His reward shall be not only ineffable, but eternal. "What is wanting here?" exclaimed the flattering courtier to a royal conqueror, riding in the pomp of a triumphal procession. "Continuance," replied the moralising emperor. But when amidst the splendour of celestial glory, one happy spirit shall ask another, "What is wanting here?" the answer shall be, "Nothing; for these scenes shall never fade." The attribute of immortality to which, amidst the groans of creation, the human race have ever aspired, belongs to the joys which the Father hath prepared for them that love him. These joys are all summed up in that one expression, most sublime to hear, eternal life. With us, who enjoy the benefit of revelation, immortality is not, as it was with the wisest of the heathen, a mere conjecture. They looked across the sea of life, and thought they saw the mountains of another and better country, but all was dim; and whether what they saw was delusive or real, they could not tell. Judaism gave some assuring intimations of a state of future glory, yet clouds and shadows rested on the prospect. "Life and immortality were first brought to light by the gospel," and they are revealed and promised not to the philosopher only, but to the unlettered and the child. Deathless honours shall flourish on the brow of every servant of God, and

eternal felicity settle in his bosom. He is ever advancing to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." To this honour and felicity we feel confident our deceased friend has been advanced by his approving Lord.

Mr. Berry was a native of this town, where he was born September the 22nd, 1757. It was his privilege to descend from a line of religious ancestors who professed and adorned the principles of Protestant dissenters. His father,* in whose venerable and venerated form was embodied all that was holy, meek, and lovely in true piety, was a deacon of this church nearly half a century. His grandfather, Mr. Charles

* This excellent man, when he became an orphan early in life, was watched over by Mr. Job Orton, who succeeded his father in the ministerial office at Shrewsbury, and by him was brought to Birmingham to be apprenticed. He arrived in this town soon after the division of the congregation at the Old Meeting House, and married a daughter of Mr. Thomas Allen, one of the persons who, when Arianism was introduced into that place of worship, withdrew and founded the church in Carr's-lane. Mr. Berry was connected with the church nearly sixty years, was acquainted with all its pastors, and watched all its vicissitudes. The first pastor of Carr's-lane church, Mr. Gervas Wild, devoted the sabbath evening to a public catechetical lecture, when the young people being arranged in the front of the gallery, were questioned from the pulpit. Many of the catechumens continued their attendance till they were married, and Mr. Berry, with his bride, filled up their places several sabbath evenings after the nuptial knot was tied. He was a man of most patriarchal appearance, of peculiar gentleness of manners, and maintained, till the end of life, such unblemished purity of conduct that many were heard to say, "If there be no other christian in the world, Mr. Berry is one." Honourable, enviable testimony! He lived to see a son and three grandsons ministers of religion; the subject of the present discourse; Mr. Joseph Berry, late of Warminster, now of Broad-street, London; Mr. Charles Berry, of Leicester (Unitarian); and Mr. Cornelius Berry, of Hatfield Heath, Essex.

Berry, was an excellent dissenting minister at Shrewsbury, and was cut off in the midst of his days and his usefulness. Our friend having enjoyed the advantage of a religious education, gave early and decisive evidence that the hallowed instructions of his parents had not been in vain in the Lord. While at a boarding school, his piety was so evident as to attract the observation, and sometimes receive the persecution of other scholars, and was so well known to the master as to procure for him the privilege of retiring to his chamber before bedtime for the exercise of secret prayer. I have in my possession a book, in which are many hymns, essays, and reflections on religious subjects which were written by him in his sixteenth year. Their piety appears the experience of an aged christian, while their talent would do credit to a much older mind. I shall here only select his meditations on the sixteenth anniversary of his birth day.

"I have this day lived sixteen years in the world, and oh! how little improvement have I made in all this time; how little improvement I have made in natural things; in my learning, viz., Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. To be sure, I know a little more than I did at fifteen years old; but I have not made so much improvement as I might have done. How thankful ought I to be to God for still continuing to me my capacity for learning. Blessed be his name that he has given me power and ability to learn. O that I may be enabled well to occupy and improve the talents he has entrusted me with. Human learning is a great blessing in its place, and I would desire to esteem it as such, and would be very thankful that the Lord has put my parents in a capacity to give me a competent share of it. But oh! what is

it in comparison of grace; it will only make me so much the worse; it will have a tendency to make my heart so much the more stubborn and haughty against God. God grant that I may have my heart filled with the sanctifying and real grace of God, and be enabled to seek, first of all, the welfare of my immortal soul. And now what improvement have I made in the things of God in the past year. Oh! what reason have I to be ashamed and confounded when I consider how little I have learnt of God and my own heart. How little of God have I had in my thoughts. How little seriously and deeply concerned about my precious and immortal soul. How little have I lived to the honour and glory of my creator and bounteous benefactor, who has taken care of me, and led me hitherto; who has preserved me from many dangers, both seen and unseen. And oh! many and aggravated have been my sins against this good God.

"Another year is now past and gone. How many immortal souls have, within the compass of it, taken their leave of their bodies, and of all things here below, and entered upon an endless eternity, and yet I am spared. O that my spared life may be devoted to the fear of God, and spent in his service. O my soul! thou art a year nearer eternity than thou wast, nearer either heaven or hell. And now let me examine seriously to which of these two states am I tending? Have I any well-grounded reason to hope that I am born again? Have I an interest in the Lord Jesus Christ? Am I clothed with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, and so, consequently, ready for death whenever it may come. Though I am young, I am not too young to die. Many are the instances of mortality I see around me,

and several much younger than myself are dropping off time after time. How much of this year I may be spared, I know not: God only knows. Life is very uncertain. O that I could live in a continual preparedness for death and eternity; that I could spend this year, or at least as much of it as I am spared, in the fear and service of God; that I might be enabled to keep close to him; that his grace might enable me to withstand and oppose the temptations of Satan and my own desperately wicked heart, that are ever tempting me to go aside from God. 'Tis true I am not much engaged in the things and concerns of this world, which might have a tendency to draw me aside from God. But oh! I have a vile, abominable, wicked heart, which, like a deceitful bow, is ever prone to start aside from the living God. O that the Lord would be pleased to take it away, and give me a heart of flesh; a heart to love him more, and serve him better; and enable me to live more to his honour and glory than I have hitherto done. Amen."

In his seventeenth year he entered as a student at Homerton College, to prepare for the work of the christian ministry. In consequence of his going thither directly from school, he did not connect himself with this society, but joined the church under the care of Mr. Webb, in Fetter-lane, London. Having finished his preparatory studies under Drs. Fisher, Gibbons, and Stafford, he received from the former, in the name of the rest, this testimony to his character and conduct:— "We esteem it an honour and a pleasure to have had Mr. Berry under our care."

On his removal from Homerton he commenced the discharge of ministerial duties at Shaftesbury, in Dor-

setshire, about Michaelmas, 1778; but not intending to settle there, declined accepting the pastoral office. Having laboured there about two years, he removed to Romsey, where he was ordained April 26, 1781. Here, in the midst of a numerous and respectable congregation, he continued for fourteen years to preach the gospel with acceptance and success, and then removed to West Bromwich. He had not occupied this station more than two years when he was drawn from a seclusion, pleasant from being in the immediate vicinity of his friends, to become the classical tutor of the academy in which he had received his education. It was no small honour to preside over that most respectable and valuable institution. Although he had no pastoral charge during his residence at Homerton, he continued to discharge the duties of the ministerial office as an occasional preacher to different congregations in London. And it was during these exertions that he laid the foundations of the disease which ultimately brought him to his rest and his reward. After preaching evening lectures in the city, he had to walk home, three or four miles, in all weathers, and thus caught one cold after another until he had contracted a confirmed and most painful asthma. It is thus "death worketh in us, but life in you."

In 1800 he resigned the professor's chair, and accepted an invitation from the church at Camberwell to become its pastor, amongst whom, beloved and esteemed, he laboured with great acceptance for nearly twelve years, and with whom, but for the increase of his pulmonary complaint, he would, in all probability, have continued to the hour of his death. Finding his disorder gaining ground, and thinking that the soft and humid

air of Camberwell was too relaxing for his constitution, he resolved, after much deliberation, to give up his charge, and try the effect of a residence in the vicinity of his native town. Hither he was guided by the providence of God in the year 1812, and soon found by the improvement of his health, that he who "knoweth our frame, and fixeth the bounds of our habitation," had sent him here to prolong his life and labours.

Just about the time of Mr. Berry's settlement in our neighbourhood, the congregation assembling in this place, affectionately anxious for the health of their minister, solicited him to preach but twice on the Sabbath, and to procure assistance for the afternoon service. Our views were instantly directed to our departed friend, as eminently suited, if he could be induced to comply with our request, to occupy the pulpit on that part of the day. Finding himself equal to the service, and loving his work, he immediately accepted the invitation, and during the period of nearly seven years preached to us the words of eternal life. After the alarming illness with which I was visited, four years ago, he tendered his resignation, that I might procure an assistant who would be able to render me more help in the duties of the pastoral office than it was possible for him in his infirm state of health to afford. Since then he has occasionally preached here and elsewhere. It is a pleasant recollection to me that he witnessed, approved, and by his property assisted the rebuilding of this spacious place of worship. His prayer, on the day of its dedication, will not be speedily forgotten by those who heard it, and it is not saying too much of it to affirm, that it was among the most affecting parts of the service. Since then he has preached twice in the new meeting-

house. His last sermon, which was a peculiarly interesting and impressive one, was delivered in this place December the 3rd, from Genesis vi, 9: "Noah walked with God."

About the fall of last year it was evident to himself and to his friends that his disease began to make considerable inroads upon his constitution. During the last three months the progress of decay was very rapid, but still it was not such as to indicate that the time of his departure was so near at hand. He had serious apprehensions from the beginning of the year that he should die before its close. A life of sixty-three years, the greater part of which was spent in preaching the gospel, and living the law of God, would have furnished sufficient attestation to the sincerity and consistency of his christian profession, even if we had been deprived by his sudden removal of that solemn seal which was affixed to it by a hope as supporting in death as it had been purifying in life. It is certainly a desirable thing that they who have borne a living, should also be enabled to bear a dying, testimony to the truth, excellence, and suitableness of the gospel. It is to be wished that we should see the setting sun of a Christian throw a lustre over the clouds of mortality collecting to hide him from our view, and attract every eye by softened effulgence until he retires to shine upon another hemisphere. But this is not necessary to our confidence respecting the happiness of departed Christians; they are as safe when a dark veil is suddenly drawn over the splendour of their virtues, as if those virtues were permitted to pour upon the eye of survivors a steady flood of sacred radiance, or dart upon it the most brilliant coruscations of faith and hope. But "death-bed sayings, parting words,

sacred relics of sentiment and feeling, which surviving friends may treasure up in their memories and their hearts, and repeat with mourning delight in recounting to each other the memorabilia of that loved friend, whose empty chair in the family circle reminds them of dear enjoyments never to return," are sweet to those who remain gazing on the track of the ascended spirit. They come upon the mind like the visitation of the angels to the apostles, when they had just lost in the cloud their departed Lord.

This privilege was granted to the friends of Mr. Berry; his disease was of a nature to leave him leisure and the full possession of his faculties, to calculate the consequences of dying. He saw the King of Terrors, when he could only be descried afar off, setting in motion his forces; he beheld him slowly, but certainly, advancing; watched every stage of his approach, and counted every step of his march; heard without alarm the announcements of his herald; and surveyed without fear the terrors of his train; and while awful voices were saying, "Thou shalt die and not live," he calmly replied, "I am ready to be offered up; I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

His frame of mind from the beginning of his last illness was that of serene tranquillity and peaceful hope. During my first interview with him after his disease had become alarming, he said to me, and often repeated the assurance to others, "If God were to give me my choice whether to live or die, I should instantly request him to take back the matter into his own hands, to make the

decision for me, and should feel perfectly content with his determination, either to go or remain." This is what the great Mr. Howe calls the glory of a Christian, "being neither weary of the world nor fond of it." During this conversation I informed him of the death of Mr. Toller, and that it had been always his desire to die suddenly. "Sir," he replied, "I think it best to have no wish on that subject, but to leave the manner as well as the time of our death to the choice of God."

It is recorded of Metastasio, the poet and musician, that he had such a dread of death, that to introduce the subject in his hearing was to ensure a banishment from his presence for ever. Not so our friend. He would talk of death with composure, because he could speak of it with a hope full of immortality. His tranquillity was not that which is produced by the hardening process of a stoical philosophy, which after smiting the soul as with palsy, boasts that it is beyond the infirmity of feeling. Nor was his serenity like the affected frivolity of some infidels, who having spent their lives in sporting with invisible realities, have acquired such habits of levity that they can laugh at the shadows of eternity closing around them, and turn with the merriment of a jester to the gloom of annihilation.

Tell me not of the man who, when in his own apprehension he is on the verge of utter extinction, can make merry with mythological fables, and amuse himself with the ferryman of the Styx. There is nothing great in all this. If these are the trophies which philosophy hangs around the temple of reason, and waves over the tombs of her heroes, she is welcome to them all. Christianity will never commit the sacrilege of stealing them, nor the sin of coveting them; she has nobler scenes to

exhibit, sublimer victories to boast, richer spoils to display. She can show you her votaries maintaining fearful conflict upon the borders of eternity; overcoming by the power of faith, the love of life and fear of death; serious, as every one ought to be in such circumstances as those of dying, yet not trembling, but calm in the confidence of hope; weeping, as every one should be, when the ties that bind them to earth are successively dissolving, yet drying up their tears in the prospect of heaven; awed by the expectation of meeting their Judge, yet preparing for the interview by reposing on the Saviour; displaying the humility of one who is bowing to the sentence of death, and at the same time the triumph of those who have laid hold on eternal life; at one and the same moment uniting the tenderness of the mortal with the grandeur of the immortal.

Such was the state of mind in which death found Mr. Berry. "Sir, (said he), I feel it a serious thing to die. Although I am not afraid of the consequences of dying, I have some little dread of what are called the agonies of death. I cannot quite approve (he continued) of the sentiment, but I see great force in the expression of the burial service of the Church of England! 'O God, most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou worthy Judge Eternal, suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from thee.'" To his friends around him he dwelt with much pleasure and emphasis on the security of his hopes as founded on the sacrificial atonement of the Lamb of God.

During the last few months of his life, a peculiar placidity, gentleness, and spirituality of mind had been visible in him, which increasing as he drew still nearer to the grave, looked as if his soul had caught the first

beams of that cloudless and eternal day, which has now burst upon him with its ineffable and unfading splendour. His dismission was most merciful. No increase of suffering indicated that he was approaching the gate of death. Gently as an infant sinks to rest on the bosom of its mother, and resigns itself to the slumber of the night, did he, while his children were watching him, fall asleep in Jesus. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

There is no season, I admit, at which a beloved father can be spared by an affectionate family; they can see a value in the wreck of what he once was, and find his wintry years and snow-crowned head pleasant, but otherwise Mr. Berry's life was over for every desirable purpose. He had seen all his family grow up in life respectable and respected; had arrived nearly at the verge of old age; and had been so enfeebled by disease, that neither his usefulness nor his comfort could be prolonged; under such circumstances, therefore, he might well exclaim, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

Sixteen years' acquaintance, nine of which were spent in the enjoyment of a friendship never for a moment interrupted, cause me to say, "I have lost a friend; and in this selfish, changing world, such friends 'grow not thick on every bough.'" His regard for this church has been tried by circumstances which it would not be proper here to relate, but which have proved how steady and how strong was his attachment.

It would be quite superfluous for me to say any thing in attestation of the unblemished purity of his morals, or the unbroken consistency of his religious

profession. Suspicion herself hath nothing to suggest, nor will calumny venture to open her mouth to defame him. There are no posthumous disclosures to be made unfriendly to his reputation; no dishonourable secrets to be first circulated in whispers, then proclaimed with trumpets; there is nothing to come out that will require interpretation or defence. A profession of religion, which has flourished during half a century, and in different situations, of which the leaf never withered, and the fruit never failed, gave good evidence of his having been planted by God in the courts of his house.

In religious opinion Mr. Berry was a decided, but moderate Calvinist. What are called, and rightly called, the doctrines of grace, were the foundation of his hope, the joy of his heart, and the theme of his ministry. He did not veil his sentiments, nor utter them under the disguise of dark sayings. His creed was not a problem incapable of being solved by those who heard him. He attached great importance to right sentiments in religion, yet was he no bigot. Mild in controversy, and dispassionate in argument, he had none of the wormwood and gall of the polemic. He remembered what it would be well for us all to remember, that truth appears most majestic and attractive when supported by the gentler virtues; and that its progress more resembles the course of the sun, illuminating, but silent, than that of the storm, which rides upon the wings of the wind.

His discourses, if they partook not of the loftier properties of eloquence, were characterised by a luminous perspicuity and simple elegance. There was a perfect transparency of style in his composition which

not only rendered it possible to understand him, but almost impossible to misunderstand him. His preaching was always that of a sound, well-informed mind, and replete with solid instruction. He was rather a practical than a doctrinal preacher, and probably more adapted to edify the Christian than alarm the sinner. That mind must have been very high in knowledge or in presumption which could learn nothing from his sermons; and that heart in a most unenviable state which could not enjoy them. Possessing little imagination, he never employed the ornaments of rhetoric, and appeared anxious only to exhibit the meaning of his text, and make it understood. Having adopted early in life the practice of reading his sermons, according to the fashion of the time, he never could abandon it; but it was matter of regret to him that he had rendered himself dependent on his notes.*

* It would be a matter most deeply to be deplored if the practice of reading sermons, instead of freely delivering them, should ever again become common, of which there is no small danger, from the example of some eminent preachers in the north. That one exalted mind here and there should be able to convert even the appendage of the sermon book, like Saturn his ring, into an aid of his splendour, is no reason why minds of less force should attempt the experiment. The slavish reading of even a good sermon would, in many cases, surround it with a dense atmosphere through which its beauty would but dimly appear. What would Spencer have been had he read his discourses? I believe the practice, if not confined to England, prevails far less on the continent than here. Let it not be thought there is no alternative between writing and mere extemporaneous effusions, poured forth at random, and without forethought. Many who never take a line with them into the pulpit, study their sermons with as much care as those who read every syllable. Admitting that a sermon can be read with greater verbal accuracy than one delivered without notes, it should be remembered, that what is gained in accuracy is lost in impressiveness.

His conduct partook much of the mild and gentle virtues of Christianity. He was a man of peace and lover of concord. For peace he would always have sacrificed almost every thing but principle. A lovely disposition this, and the more valuable on account of its rarity. What a world we should live in if every one were to cultivate, as our deceased friend unquestionably did, that "charity which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

Next to his inoffensiveness, and nearly allied to it, was his distinguished prudence. I know no one who walked through life with more cautious circumspection. He never by rashness or impetuosity plunged himself into difficulties, or involved himself or his friends in vexatious contests. He was never called to make humiliating concessions or disgraceful retreats. Prudence is necessary for all, but as a ministerial qualification, it is next in importance to piety itself. For want of it the strongest powers of mind are often useless; by the help of it even the feeblest may do great good. Unfortunately it is looked upon by some as a low and grovelling virtue, as a mere weight on the wing of genius. Among the excellencies of our departed friend was his entire freedom from censoriousness. During the sixteen years' acquaintance that I have had with him, I know not that in one single instance I ever heard him voluntarily speak to the disadvantage of another; and when he was obliged to admit a fault, he did so in such a way as showed him to be most remote from the love of censure.

How humble he was you all know who were in the habit of observing his deportment. With a mind well stored with learning, and the various reading of half a

century, he possessed the modesty and unobtrusiveness of a child. He delivered his opinion in the company of those who might have sat at his feet to receive instruction, with the diffidence of a youth who had not passed his noviciate. Probably a little more energy of character would have rendered him more useful, by giving him more weight.

The pressure of bodily infirmity, united with a retiring disposition, prevented him from entering much into what might be denominated the public life of religion. I have been informed that when younger and healthier, he was not backward to support the schemes of zeal which were then in operation; and that with him originated the most efficient county union in the kingdom; I mean the Hampshire Association of Ministers and Churches.

Thus lived, laboured, and died, the respected subject of this discourse. The earthly house of his tabernacle is dissolved, but his disembodied spirit has fled to inhabit a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Long ere we could convey his earthly remains to their sepulchral repository, he had looked upon the gracious countenance of the Chief Shepherd, and received that smile which is a pastor's highest and last reward.

May the ever-living Jehovah be the God and Judge of the widow in his holy habitation. May the children and children's children be followers of him who now though faith and patience inherits the promises. May those of them especially who preach the Word of God be enabled to keep the pattern of their respected father before their eyes. May they learn by these domestic vicissitudes to speak with still more feeling and seriousness of the vanity of all earthly affairs, and after having

been brought at some distant period to their own graves, rich in years, usefulness, and honour, may they meet in glory with him who first taught their infant feet the way of piety, and unite with him through eternity in praising God for the abundant grace bestowed upon their family.

Let us learn from this subject to look up amidst the mortality of ministers with joy and confidence to the perfections and immortality of the chief Shepherd. Let us be admonished by it to be ever ready for the last eventful hour of life. Let us learn the excellence of that religion which regenerates the heart, sanctifies the life, soothes the mind under all its sorrows, supports the soul amidst the decays of nature, throws a lustre over the dark valley, opens the portals of the celestial city, and having conducted the disembodied spirit to the throne, returns again to earth to pour the balm of consolation into the minds of mourning relatives, and conduct them onward to that world where connexions strengthened and hallowed by religion shall be rewarded, perfected, and perpetuated. Amen.

YOUTH WARNED.

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN CARRS LANE MEETING HOUSE,

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 4TH, 1824,

AND

ADDRESSED PARTICULARLY TO YOUNG MEN.

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded."

The Author made it his practice to preach to the young on the first Lord's Day of the year, and the following sermon was one of the series, and was designed to give a beneficial turn to the impression produced by the trial and execution of Thurtell for the murder of Weare. That trial was the cause célèbre of that generation, and no one now reading an account of it can imagine the sensation which it excited throughout England.

But the chief interest of this sermon arises from the circumstance that the remarks which it contains against theatrical amusements drew down upon the Author the displeasure of the playgoing part of the community. Several pamphlets were in consequence published against him by persons who wished to write themselves into notice, and the sermon reached a fourth edition, but the matter was comparatively soon forgotten at home. On the Author's decease, however, there appeared in a New York newspaper an attack upon him full of misstatements, and evidently the production of a provincial writer on theatrical subjects, who had been interested in the quarrel.

The Author was grieved at the ill will which he thus contracted as tending to weaken his hold on his fellow townsmen, and it was clear from what he from time to time said on the subject that he had become convinced that the best method of opposing any popular amusement which may appear wrong, is rather by inculcating counteracting principles than by a direct attack upon it.

I WISH it were possible, young men, for me to disclose to you the deep solicitude and earnest desire for your welfare, with which I meet you this evening, and commence this effort of ministerial fidelity: such a knowledge of my feelings and my motives would ensure me your serious and candid attention. In selecting you as the special objects of my address, I have been influenced by a painful conviction, which I should be glad to have disproved, that there was scarcely ever a period when such admonitions as those which I shall deliver on the present occasion, were more needed by persons of your sex and age. Without pretending to say that the youth of this generation are more corrupt than those of former times, I will assert that their moral interests are now exposed from various causes to very imminent peril. The improvement and diffusion of modern education, have produced a bold and independent mode of thinking, which, though it be in itself a benefit, requires a proportionate degree of religious restraint to prevent it from degenerating into lawless licentiousness. It is probable also, that of late years parents have relaxed the salutary rigour of domestic discipline, in compliment to the improved understanding of their children. Trade and commerce are now so widely extended, that our youth are more from beneath their parents' inspection than formerly, and consequently

more exposed to the contaminating influence of evil company. The habits of society in general, are becoming more expensive and luxurious. And in addition to all this, the secret but zealous efforts of infidelity to circulate works, which by attempting to undermine revealed religion, aim to subvert the whole fabric of morals, have most alarmingly increased irreligion and immorality. But whatever be the causes, the fact to me is indubitable, that multitudes of the young men of the present day are exceedingly corrupt and profane. Such a state of things rouses and interests all my feelings as a father, a minister, and a patriot: I am anxious for my own children, as well as for the youth of my flock, my town, and my country. You are to be the fathers, young men, of the next generation; and most solicitous do I feel that you should transmit religion and not vice to posterity. Listen then with seriousness to what I shall this evening advance, from motives of pure and faithful affection.

I shall direct your attention to that solemn portion of sacred Scripture which you will find in

Ecclesiastes xi, 9.

Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.

The design of Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes seems to be this, after detailing the good things

of life to the widest extent, setting them in the strongest light, and granting to them every possible advantage which their most passionate admirers contend for, to demonstrate, that as they are attended with so many inseparable evils, are so shortlived in their continuance, so unprofitable in the hour of death, and so utterly useless in the world beyond the grave, they are insufficient for the wants, and inadequate to the happiness of the soul of man. No one was more capable of forming a correct opinion on this subject than Solomon; since no man ever commanded more resources of earthly delight than he did, or ever more eagerly availed himself of the opportunities which he possessed: and yet did he grow disgusted and dissatisfied with sensual pleasures, and at length give us the sum total of worldly enjoyment in those two cyphers, vanity and vexation of spirit. His testimony, therefore, is to be considered (not as the cynical declamation of an ascetic, who had never tasted sensual indulgence, but) as that of a man who had drunk the cup to its dregs, and who found those dregs to be wormwood, gall, and poison.

I am not unaware that some expound the language of the text as containing an intimation of Solomon's willingness to allow young people the full gratification of their senses, and the indulgence of their appetites, coupled with an admonition to let their pursuit and enjoyment of pleasure be regulated by a reference to the judgment of God, as it is recorded in the Scripture, and will be published at the last day. Although I do not think this is the meaning of the text, because the terms employed in the passage are generally used by the sacred writers in a bad sense, as importing criminal indulgence, yet there is nothing in the sentiment to which, when

properly explained, I object. I allow youth all that pleasure which the Word of God sanctions, and which his sentence in the day of judgment will not condemn. I would say, "Young man, enjoy thyself, thy senses are in full vigour, thy imagination lively; it is the vernal season of thy existence, gratify thy genius and thy taste, and as long as thy pleasures accord with the letter and spirit of revelation, and will secure the approbation of God in the judgment day, they are innocent and lawful. But take heed how thou allowest thyself any gratification until thou hast tried it by the Word of God, and proved it to be innocent." I am quite willing to make the Scriptures the standard of our pleasures, as well as of our duties. Religion and melancholy are not as some think synonymous terms. Piety is as far from gloom as noontide is from midnight. "Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." There is joy and peace in believing, a peace that passeth understanding, a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Religion gives the substance of happiness for the shadow; the reality for the name. It allows all that enjoyment of the comforts of earth, which is not incompatible with the pursuit of eternal salvation in heaven.

I. The text properly explained, consists of an Ironical Address. Under a seeming permission, this language contains a very strong and pointed prohibition. It is as if the writer had said, "Thoughtless and sensual young man, who hast no idea of happiness but as arising from animal indulgence, and who art drinking continually the intoxicating cup of worldly pleasure, pursue thy course if thou art determined on this mode of life, gratify thy appetites, indulge all thy passions, deny thyself nothing, eat, drink and be merry; disregard the

admonitions of conscience, trample under foot the authority of revelation, but think not that thou shalt always prosper in the ways of sin, or carry for ever that air of jollity and triumph. The day of reckoning is at hand, when for all these things thou wilt be called into judgment. God now witnesses, and takes account of all thy ways, and will one day call thee to his bar, and reward thee according to thy doings."

It is implied in this address, that young men are much addicted to sensual pleasure. This has been the case with every generation and in every country: and it is too common not only for the young themselves, but even for their seniors and their sires to justify or palliate their vicious excesses. We not unfrequently hear the abominable adage, "Youth for pleasure, age for business, and old age for religion." It is not possible for language to utter, or mind to conceive, a more gross or shocking insult to God than this; which is in effect saying, "when I can no longer enjoy my lusts, or pursue my gains, then I will carry to God a body and soul worn out in the service of sin, Satan, and the world." The monstrous wickedness and horrid impiety of this idea is enough, one should think, when put clearly to him, to shock and terrify the most confirmed and careless sinner in existence. There are many things which tend to cherish in the youthful breast, and to justify in the estimation of young men, the love of sensual pleasure. At their age care sits lightly on the heart, the passions are strong, the imagination is lively, the health is good, the social impulse is felt in all its energy, the attractions of company are powerful; and this they imagine is the halcyon time for them to take their fill of pleasure. They think that they shall be steady enough by and by,

when the season of youth is past; and that sobriety, morality, and religion will all come in the proper order of nature. Worldly pleasure, decked in the voluptuous attire and the meretricious ornaments of a harlot, appears to their heated imagination, with all the attractive charms of a most bewitching beauty. They yield themselves at once to her influence, and consider her as abundantly able to afford them all the happiness they desire. Their great concern is to gratify their senses. The soul and all her vast concerns is neglected for the pleasures of fleshly appetites, and is condemned to the degradation of acting as a mere waiting maid to minister to the enjoyment of the body. Young men, can you justify, either at the bar of reason or revelation, such an appropriation of the morning of your existence, of the best and loveliest portion of your life? If there be indeed a God who made and preserves you, is it reasonable that the season of youth should be passed in a manner hateful in his sight? Is this the way to ensure his blessing on your future days? Is it reasonable that your juvenile vigour should be exhausted on vices forbidden by his Word? Were the noble faculties of the human soul conferred for no other purposes than to minister to her corruptions? To what part of the Word of God will you turn and not find your practices condemned? Where is it said that young people may innocently walk in all kinds of sensual indulgences? On what page of the book of God's truth do you find these allowances for the excesses of youth, which you make for yourselves, and ill-judging friends make for you? "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the

harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of his hands." This is the testimony of the Lord, delivered as much against the sins of youth as those of riper years. And is it not mentioned amongst other vices by St. Paul, "that men should be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?" There is no exception in your favour, from the obligations of piety, in all the Word of God: on the contrary, how many are the admonitions to youthful religion: there is not one duty of true godliness binding upon you in future years, which does not rest with all its authority upon you at the present moment. Is youth the season for sinful pleasure then! Is this best and most influential portion of your existence to be deliberately given up to vice! That is a dreadful idea; repugnant alike to reason and revelation.

1. If sensual pleasure be pursued as the object of youthful years, see how it will influence all your pursuits. Where young men live in this way, it directs their reading, which is not pious or improving, but light, trifling, and polluting. Inflammatory novels, stimulating romances, lewd poetry, immoral songs, satires against religious characters, and arguments against revelation,* are in general the works consulted

* If any young person, who has had doubts of the divine authority of the Bible raised in his mind, should wish to examine the subject for himself (which is certainly much more rational than to indulge unfounded prejudices), the Author earnestly recommends to him the perusal of the following books: Leslie's "Short and Easy Method with the Deists;" Bishop Watson's "Apology for the Bible, in answer to the objections of Paine;" Dr. Bogue's "Essay on the Divine Authority of the New Testament;" Dr. Campbell's "Dissertation on Miracles, in reply to Hume;" and Dr. Chalmers's "Evidence and Authority of the Christian Religion."

by corrupt and vicious youth, and by these they become still more vicious. Never did the press send forth streams of greater pollution than at this time. Authors are to be found, of no mean talents, who pander to every corruption of the youthful bosom. Almost every vice has its high priest, to burn incense on its altar, and to lead its victims, decked with the garlands of poetry or fiction, to their ruin.*

2. A love of sinful pleasure will give the tone to your conversation; which will be vain, loose and un-

* As for Byron, his exquisite pathos and almost peerless beauty, can make no atonement for his vices, and should have no power to reconcile us to his works. He is, indeed, as he has been styled, the master of a satanic school. Infidelity and immorality never before received such patronage from the poetic muse. Never before was genius seen in closer union with vice. His works are enough to corrupt the morals of a nation, and seem to have been written for the purpose; and he appears to have been stirred up by an evil spirit, to attempt by his poems that mischief which the wit of Voltaire, the subtleties of Hume, and the popular ribaldry of Paine, had in vain endeavoured to effect. At length the indignation of heaven seems to have been roused to scorch with its lightning the wings of his lofty but impious genius: as his later productions evince a singular destitution of the talent which characterised the earlier effusions of his muse. One can scarcely suppose it possible that even he can read the last cantos of his most vicious work, without secretly exclaiming under a consciousness of their inferiority, "How am I fallen!" If young men would not be cursed by the infidelity and immorality which lurk within his pages, let them beware how they touch his volumes as they would a beautiful form infected with the plague.

[The more religious part of the community appear not to impute such settled designs of mischief to his Lordship, or to proscribe his works as formerly. But this may be owing to his works being now comparatively unread. Certainly at the present we are emancipated from the power of poetry in general. It is difficult to recall the delight with which any new poem of Byron was read by the youth, his contemporaries. He was felt as their deliverer from the artifices and mannerisms of the preceding versifiers.]

profitable; if not obscene, filthy and profane. Jests against religion, sneers at the piety of the righteous, irreverent appeals to heaven, shocking oaths, and a boastful parade of the immoralities they have committed, the females they have seduced, or the revels they have shared in, make up the conversation, I fear, of some circles. Young men, is it for this the noble faculty of speech was given, that distinction of man from the brute creation; that exquisite vehicle of thought and medium of communication between mind and mind? Can you think of the strains of conversation to which you have often listened, and in which you have often joined, without horror? Could the discourse of a single evening be penned down just as it occurred, in all its inanity, silliness, obscenity and profanity, and then read over to you; surely, surely, if every spark of shame was not extinguished in your nature, your faces would be covered with blushes, and your soul filled with confusion at the shocking recital. There is something most disgusting and most horrible, to hear a man boast of the crimes which he has committed, and with ostentation set forth the pains which he has taken to blast the prospects of others, and ruin his own immortal soul. The Scripture makes it a sin even to be proud of good deeds; but to be proud of bad ones is a disposition truly infernal. For young men to study first to excel in deeds of riot and debauchery, and then to proclaim their feats, is to try who shall be at once most brutalised and most diabolical, and then to be proud of the transformation. As for swearing, I scarcely know anything which more decidedly proves a depraved heart; since it gratifies no passion and indulges no appetite, but is unmingled wickedness against God. Probably there is

nothing which has a more polluting effect on the imagination, or a more hardening influence on the heart, than filthy, obscene, and profane conversation; and the man who can ever listen to it with pleasure must already have become very vile, and is hourly becoming more so.

3. A love of sensual pleasure will, of course, direct young men in the choice of their companions; and these will not be the moral and serious, but the thoughtless, the gay, and the dissipated. Fellowship seems necessary to give zest to vice. There is something cowardly in sin. It likes not solitude and silence: the one is soon peopled to the sinner's perturbed imagination with frowning forms, and the other broken by threatening voices. He rushes, therefore, into company to recruit his courage and gratify his lusts; not to persuade himself that he is doing right, but to get rid of the consciousness that he is doing wrong, and drown the clamours of his conscience in the uproar of his companions; at once to be vicious and merry. Young men, if you determine to live in the gratification of your passions and the indulgence of your sinful appetites, you will soon have associates suited to your taste, and that will never disturb your conscience with the language of warning or reproof. And will these be licentious wits, blaspheming scoffers, apostate christians, hardened rakes, degraded sots, avowed infidels, abandoned prostitutes? Look at the party. Can you approve it? Are there not moments, when you feel the last dying remains of moral feeling stirring within you in sickening revulsion at such society as this? But even these dying, lingering signs of a conscience not quite dead, will soon vanish, and you will yield yourself

without a struggle to all the corrupting, damning influence of bad company.

4. The recreations and amusements of young men who live in sinful pursuits are of the same nature as their reading, conversation, and company, polluted and polluting. The theatre is generally frequented by them; the theatre, that corrupter of public morals; that school where nothing good and every thing bad is learnt; that resort of the vicious and seminary of vice; that broad and flowery avenue to the bottomless pit. Here a young man finds no hinderances to sin, no warnings against irreligion, no mementos of judgment to come; but, on the contrary, every thing to inflame his passions, to excite his criminal desires, and to gratify his appetites for vice. The language, the music, and the company, are all adapted to a sensual taste, and calculated to demoralize the mind.* Multitudes of once comparatively innocent and happy youths have to date their ruin

* It is by no means the author's intention to affirm that all who frequent the theatre are vicious persons. Far be it from him to prefer an accusation so extensive and unfounded as this. No doubt many amiable and moral persons are among the admirers of dramatic representation. That they receive no contamination from the scenes they witness, or the language they hear, is no stronger proof that the stage is not immoral in its tendency and effects, than that there is no contagion in the plague, because some constitutions resist the infection. That persons fenced in by every conceivable moral defence and restraint, should escape uninjured, is saying little; but even in their case, I will contend that the mind is not altogether uninjured. Is it possible for an imperfect moral creature (and such are the best of us,) to hear the irreverend appeals to heaven, the filthy allusions, the anti-christian sentiments, which are uttered during the representation of even our purest plays, and hear these for amusement, without some deterioration of mental purity? And it should be remembered that none but the pure in heart shall see God. But let us think of a young man going alone and unprotected to a theatre, or in the

for both worlds from the hour when their feet first trod within the polluted precincts of a theatre. Till then they were ignorant of many of the ways of vice. That fatal night was the dreadful season of their initiation into the mysteries of iniquity. Afterwards they fell from morality and respectability, and continued falling deeper and deeper in vice, till earth, tired of the sickening load of their corruption, heaved them from her lap; and hell, from beneath, moved to meet them at their coming. When, therefore, a young man acquires and gratifies a taste for theatrical representations, I consider his moral character in imminent peril.

Convivial parties, where eating, drinking, and revelry, are carried on till midnight, or till morning, are another source of ruin: meetings, not for the interchange of the civilities and courtesies of life, and restrained within due limits of time, sobriety, and expense; not for the feast of reason and the flow of soul; not for the cultivation and enjoyment of friendship, but for the celebra-

company only of others of his own age, and after having his passions inflamed with all he has seen and heard within, then returning home through the crowds of well-dressed prostitutes which infest the purlieus of every theatre. Is this a school to improve his morals? Yes, the morals of the brothel. The advocates of the stage should be candid, and instead of talking about its improving the taste or the morals of the age, should frankly confess (as they cannot be ignorant of it), that it is indeed a very dangerous place for young persons, but that it is an amusement of which they themselves are very fond, and that they are determined to enjoy it whatever havoc it may make in the character of others. If it were admitted that occasionally some one person had been improved by theatrical satires on vice, (though, by the way, to laugh at vice is not the best way of becoming virtuous), will they not confess that for this one case of improvement, a thousand cases of ruin could be found? I recommend all who wish to judge of the tendency of the theatre, to read an essay on this subject by Dr. Styles.

tion of Bacchanalian orgies. Young men, such meetings unfit you not only for the serious pursuits of religion, but even for the duties of business. Their expense impoverishes your purse, their influence impairs your health, and their guilt ruins your soul.

Gambling is another amusement to which young men, addicted to pleasure, frequently have recourse.* A passion for gambling is one of the most ruinous propensities that can infect the human heart. It is to the

* Every friend to the morals of his country must deplore the increasing passion for the brutal and brutalising sport of prize fights. This practice is more demoralising than it is possible to describe. It is fraught with such deadly mischief to the national manners, that it should become a matter of most serious consideration with the legisture whether more effective measures than the law now provides ought not to be taken for its suppression. There is scarcely a vice which tends to disturb the order of society that is not cherished, and, to a considerable extent, encouraged, by this odious system. Independently of the offensive spectacle exhibited by two men acting the part of wild beasts towards each other, and endeavouring, if not to tear, to beat each other in pieces; independently of the fatal manner in which these conflicts often terminate, what a system of gambling of the most pernicious description is connected with the practice! what habits of idleness are contracted; what a spirit is generated amongst the labouring classes to excel in these feats of brutal courage and savage skill; what a lure is held out to the indolent; and what a temptation thrown in the way of the industrious! Where are all the thieves, the cheats, the murderers of a country, most likely to be assembled at any given time? Round the prize ring. What a revolting and shocking instance of this kind of amusement have we lately had in a neighbouring county. At the very time when the Hertfordshire murderers were arraigned for a deed which had circulated horror through the kingdom; while the sentence was being pronounced upon them, will it be believed that 30,000 persons were assembled to witness this their favourite recreation, by which they were prepared for the crime which hurried them to the gallows? In what school was Thurtell trained to commit murder? In the ring of the prize fight. And yet thirty thousand persons, at the very time

mind what a love of ardent spirits is to the body; and to the man addicted to gambling and play, the ordinary pursuits of business will be as flat and uninteresting as looking forward to a day of bread and cold water to the drunkard craving and waiting for his dram. It is a system of excitement and stimulants, which prepares the passions for every excess. It is a parent vice, and its offspring are as deformed and monstrous as itself. It produces a serpent brood of crimes, amongst which fraud, suicide, and murder, have all been found. Young

when they were being doomed to death, were assembled to patronise the practice. In this town the fate of the murderers was lost sight of in that of the fighters, and it seemed in our streets a matter of less anxiety whether Thurtell was condemned, than whether Spring was victorious. Let any one conceive the mass of crime which was committed within the circle that surrounded the combatants; let him think of the oaths that were sworn, the pilfering that was carried on, the diabolical rage that was felt, the gambling that was practised; let him add the numbers who closed the evening with intoxication, the multitudes who were then first led astray from the paths of morality by acquiring a taste for bad conduct and bad company. Let any one think of these things and say if the race-course at Worcester, on which this crowd were assembled, did not contain a greater accumulation of crime than could be found on the same space in our world. Who can wonder at the prevalence of vice, when such things are going on? But we may wonder to hear of noblemen, gentlemen, lawyers, being present. May our youth have wisdom enough to abhor the practice; may they see that one of the nearest roads to ruin is by the ring of a prize fight. To all the flimsy arguments by which the practice is attempted to be defended, may they reply, that to be brutal is not the way to embellish our nature, and that the ferocity of a tiger and the dexterity of a savage is no ornament to a civilised rational creature.

[When this note was written, prize fighters, and especially Spring, excited an interest in classes above the lowest which they have now lost. The Editor recollects the Author taking one of the leading men in Birmingham (a man of great virtue and piety) to task for expressing admiration of the champion's "science."]

men, as you would not have these vices generated in your heart, harbour not in your bosom the mother that bears them. Retreat from the billiard and card table. If you would not end a gambler, avoid all gambling.

Still, after all that can be said of these practices, young men are to be found who will justify them on the grounds already stated. But try them by their effects. See their influence on personal religion. Religion, alas! such persons make no pretence whatever to it. They have not the fear of God before their eyes. They are not only without piety, but against it. "God is not in all their thoughts." They are atheists in practice, if not in opinion. If a man love such pleasures more than God, he has not even the semblance of piety. He is not even moral. It is true he may not be a murderer, highwayman, housebreaker, but he is still an immoral man if he be living in drunkenness, swearing, or fornication.

Try this mode of life by its influence on their usefulness. Young men who live in the enjoyment of vicious pleasure, are defeating one end of their existence, which is in every possible way to benefit their species; to do good by their property, example, and principles. Instead of this, their property is squandered upon their vices, and not devoted to relieve the misery and promote the happiness of mankind. The influence of their example, instead of falling around them like the dew, sends forth a withering blight. Their principles, instead of resembling precious grain, are the seeds of poison, which they scatter along their path. They have no part in benevolent and religious institutions. I have known young men, who, while they were moral, were active as teachers of Sunday schools, and agents of

other philanthropic institutions, immediately as they acquired a taste for sinful gratifications, withdraw their names, and retire from the scenes of christian mercy. They ceased to be philanthropists when they became immoral; and now, instead of doing good, they do harm. On how many such do the curses of indignant, heart-broken parents rest, for corrupting their sons, and seducing their daughters.

Who shall depict, in proper colours, the crime of seducing, and then abandoning an innocent female? And yet how common is it! She, poor wretched victim, the dupe of promises never intended to be fulfilled, and at length deserted as a worthless, ruined thing, seeks by the wages of iniquity to prolong a miserable existence, till, in her garret, consumed by disease, she closes a life of infamy by a death of unspeakable horror. If at the recollection of her untimely death, her betrayer feels a pang of remorse, his pity comes too late for her; it cannot restore the peace that, with felon hand, he stole from a bosom which was serene till he invaded its tranquillity; it cannot repair the virtue he corrupted; it cannot build up the character he demolished; it cannot rekindle the life which he was the means of extinguishing; much less can it call back from the torments of the damned the miserable spirit which he was the instrument of hurrying to perdition. Ah! how, one should think, must her upbraiding ghost haunt his imagination; how often must he hear her groans of despair, and see her frantic mien, seeming in every agonised distortion to say, "Look at me, my destroyer." The seducer, I admit, is less guilty than the murderer, but how much less? The latter extinguishes life at once, the former causes it to waste away by slow degrees

amidst unutterable torture; the latter hazards his own life in the commission of the crime, the former exposes himself to no personal risk; the latter is visited with the heaviest sentence that the justice of the country can inflict, but the seducer can revel in impunity, and can go on from conquering to conquer in his desolating career, and defy all justice but that of heaven. Yes, the guilty and polluted wretch will be greeted in fashionable and moral society with the same welcome as before, though he comes to it with the guilt of female ruin fresh upon his soul. Oh! when shall the time arrive that reputable females will resent this cruel indignity offered to their sex. When will they protect the virtue of their weaker sisters, by frowning from their society the individual who has betrayed one of their number to her ruin! When shall the time come that rakes and debauchees, by the consentaneous feeling of virtuous women, shall be banished from their presence? If any individual shall glance on these passages who is guilty of this great transgression, let him ponder on his guilt, and never cease through life to weep for his sin, looking for pardon through the blood of Christ. If any one should read this discourse, who meditates the crime, may I come between his basilisk eye and the victim marked for ruin, and already fluttering under the spell. Pause, young man, oh! pause, before you resolve to ruin two souls at once, and produce an entanglement of sin and misery which eternity itself shall never unravel.*

* I would not throw the blame of seduction entirely on my own sex. There are not a few to whom Solomon's description of the female tempter will apply in this age. What numbers of abandoned women infest our streets before the sun is set. Is there no means of

Amidst all your sinful jollity are you happy, young man, in your sins? Are vice and bliss synonymous? Is immorality the road to happiness? Are you satisfied with your course? Do you approve of it as the most rational mode of life? Have you the sanction of both your judgment and your conscience? You know you are not happy. You may be gratified, but you are not satisfied. You may have pleasure, but you have not happiness. When the honey of gratification is all gone, is there not a sting left behind? Expose to us your wounded bleeding spirit; admit us to your chamber at midnight, when left alone with an angry conscience, to be lashed almost to madness. Let us hear your soliloquies, when you heap your envenomed reproaches upon your own folly and wretchedness. Oh! what proofs could we recollect, even from your own lips, that the way of transgressors is hard, and the pleasures of sin are but for a season. Have there not been times also, when, in the very midst of the riot and revelry, a mysterious hand, visible only to you, came forth and wrote your doom before your eyes; when conscience arrested you, as God did Belshazzar, at the feast? From that moment the pleasure was all gone. You tried to be merry, but your smile was as the laughter of a demon, which could but ill conceal the torture that raged within; and you retired, as Esau did, when he had eaten his pottage, reflecting that it was for this you had sold your birthright. What makes you so afraid in a time of

being rid of this nuisance? If not, let our youth beware, and remember the words of scripture, "Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth, let not thine heart decline to her ways; go not astray in her paths. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

sickness? Because you seem to see death on the pale horse approaching you, and hell following in his train. Add up, young men, all the pains of vice, the anxiety which precedes, and the remorse which follows it, the stings of conscience and the reproaches of friends, the fear of being detected, and the shame of detection when it has taken place, and say if they do not far overbalance the pleasures of sin. I will concede to you that sin has its gratifications, but are they not as Solomon calls them, "The crackling of thorns beneath a pot;" a noisy, but evanescent blaze?

II. I conduct your thoughts to the second part of the subject, and show you the end of these things, as it is set forth in the solemn warning contained in the text. "Know that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." He that will hereafter be the judge, is now the witness of your conduct. God is everywhere present, and knows all things, "Lord, thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my down sitting, and mine uprising: thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before; and hast laid thine hand upon me." Such is the awful description which the Scriptures give us of an everywhere and ever-present God. He is not far from any one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being. Yes, the Lord God is everywhere, not excepting even the haunts of vice. You may exclude your parents, your masters, your ministers, from the scenes of your iniquity; you may shut out the sun, but you cannot shut out God: he is with you in the tavern, the brothel,

the theatre. Are there not times and places, in which if the form of your father were suddenly to appear before you, you would almost sink into the earth? But lift up your eyes, and see, behold, the Great Spirit is there. What! tremble at a father's glance, and yet not be terrified at the presence of a God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, and who cannot look upon sin but with abhorrence? Will you swear, and drink, and commit lewdness when the holy and all-seeing Deity is there to take account of all, and preserves the record on leaves more durable than brass? The Grecian philosopher thought it would be a sufficient check to sin, to admonish his disciples to act as they would do, if they knew the eye of Plato was upon them. And shall it be no control upon your passions, to remember, that God sees you; and for all He sees will bring you into judgment?

1. Reflect upon the certainty of judgment. It is not a cunningly devised fable: it is not a mere terrific picture intended to embellish the book of revelation. You know that there is a judgment to come. The very heathens expect it, conscience foretells it, guilt forebodes it, reason proves it, Scripture declares it. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things which he hath done in his body, according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad." You may unhappily forget the judgment, but you cannot disbelieve it.

2. This judgment will be personal. Know thou, young man, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. The subject concerns us all, and each

one in particular. To every one who shall read these pages, the admonition is individually addressed, "God will bring thee into judgment." None are so high as to rise above this accountability to God; none so low as to be beneath it. John saw the dead, small and great, standing before God to be judged. When men transgress the laws of their country, they are led on by the hope that they shall not be detected or brought to trial: they calculate the chances of escape, and indulge the expectation of impunity. But there is no room for such a hope, in reference to the judgment of the great God: this it will be impossible either to evade or resist. It is as certain that you will stand before the tribunal of Christ, and be tried for your life, as that you now exist. To that bar you will certainly be brought, whether willing or unwilling. Rocks and mountains will not hide you; no power on earth will shelter or detain you. God has declared that he will undertake this matter himself. Will you fly? whither will you go from his presence? go where you will you will be surrounded still by God. Will you resist his arrest? The whole universe is represented as brought together to judgment, with the same ease as a shepherd collects a flock of timid sheep. No, no, nothing can prevent your being placed at the tribunal of heaven. Young men, bear me witness, I give you public warning of this event. In God's name, I serve you with notice of the trial. Prepare to meet your God. He is coming, he is coming, and you must meet him. O think of judgment to come: in the midst of all your sinful pleasures and criminal liberties, think of it. Will you drink the drunkard's cup; will you go to the brothel, to the gambling table, to the scene of riot and dissipation, knowing that for all these

things God will bring you into judgment? With the terrible solemnities of the last day before your eyes, will you, can you, dare you proceed in the career of vice? Conscience, thou faithful monitor, thou dreadful avenger, I charge thee to whisper in the sinner's ear, when going to the scene of his unholy pleasures, "Yet know, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment."

3. This judgment will be strict and impartial. "Know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." All that you have done shall be brought to light and reviewed. The standard by which actions will then be tried, will be the Word of God. This is the book which will then be opened, according to which characters will be decided, and the sentence pronounced. Men will not be allowed to compare themselves with themselves, or with each other; nor will those false standards of morality and accommodating rules of action which they have now adopted be then admitted. The laws which fashionable or customary vices have modified to suit themselves will be all disallowed and swept away then. Men may now sneer at the puritanical precision and austerity which attempt to bring them to the Bible as the standard of morals; but what will they do and say when God shall open this now neglected book, and judge them according to what is written therein. How will they be confounded when they find all their pleas for another test of character and conduct overruled, and the Bible alone be admitted as the rule of conduct. Then will all you have done, young men, be brought to light. I will read a passage of Scripture that should make your ears tingle. "The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget

any of their works." This is spoken in reference to the wicked. God has bound himself then by oath, not only to the salvation of the righteous, but to the condemnation of the wicked: none of all their evil works are to be forgotten. You may now successfully attempt to conceal many of your evil ways from your parents, masters, and ministers, and admire your skill in the art of dissembling; but remember there is one whom you cannot deceive, and from whom you can conceal nothing: "He will bring every secret thing into judgment." The veil will be torn from every dark and unknown transaction. The curtain of secrecy will be drawn aside, and every scene of vice exposed just as it occurred. Think of this, and think what will be your confusion and dismay, your reproach and anguish, when all those deeds which you wish to be buried in eternal oblivion shall be remembered against you. There is no such thing as oblivion with God: nor shall you find the stream of Lethe in another world. You will be tried and sentenced according to the advantages which you have enjoyed for knowing and doing the will of God. Your Bible, your parents' instruction, your ministers' sermons, the advice you have received, the warnings you have heard, the stirrings of conscience you have felt, will all be taken into the account: yes, and even this feeble though faithful effort to reclaim you, shall not be forgotten in the fearful reckoning.

4. The consequences of this judgment will be awful and eternal. The sentence which will then be pronounced upon the wicked you may even now read copied down from the lips of him who will be the Judge. Read it, and let your hearts meditate on the terrors of "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,

prepared for the devil and his angels." Every word is replete with horrible ideas: it forms as a whole, the most appalling doom of which the mind can entertain any conception; and its execution upon the wicked shall constitute that hell of which the Word of God says so much, but of which multitudes, to their ruin, think so little. The sentence by which the law of the land deprives a man of his temporal life is terrible; but what is this to the doom which subjects the soul to the bitter pains of eternal death. When the Judge at our assizes orders the convicted felon to be brought up for condemnation, puts on the black cap, and is about to pronounce the sentence, what a deadly silence pervades the court; you may almost hear the throb of palpitating hearts; terror sits on every brow; and it seems almost as if death in a visible form, had appeared to seize his victim; while the poor culprit himself sinks to the earth beneath the weight of the sentence, and is removed from the bar in the silence of petrifying despair, or the outcries of frantic grief. And yet, may that poor creature, though properly denied mercy by the tribunal of human justice, obtain it from the throne of heavenly grace; and the judge, in the very act of excluding him from human mercy, prays that the Lord would have mercy on his soul. What then must be the horror which in the day of judgment shall accompany the sentence of the wicked. No accent of mercy will be heard mitigating the horrors of that act of justice: that sentence dooms the soul to death: no other and higher tribunal shall be found, to which an appeal may be carried for pardon and life. The sentence of the wicked in that day will be final, irreversible, and eternal. There is nothing to follow it, but "the worm that never

dies, and the fire that is never quenched; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." I cannot, if I would, describe the torments of lost souls in prison. I cannot disclose to you those

> " * * * sights of woe,
> Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
> And rest can never dwell: hope never comes
> That comes to all; but torture without end
> Still urges * *
> Such place eternal Justice hath prepar'd
> For those rebellious."

I say, I can neither disclose nor describe those scenes: but the Word of God declares that "upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." Young men, think what it must be to dwell for ever in a world where all the bad passions of human nature will attain the full maturity of their strength, and will not have one moment's cessation or gratification; and where all their force will be concentrated, like the venom of an enraged scorpion, for the purpose of self torment.

5. The judgment may be near at hand. The coming of the Lord draws nigh; the Judge stands at the door; the end of all things is at hand. The day of death is in one respect, as the day of judgment with us all: "Then the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." This year you may die. Many as young, as healthy, as wicked, as careless as yourselves, have died the past year. They have given up the ghost, and where are they? Before another year closes, you may follow them into eternity. A fever, an apoplexy, an accident, a midnight revel, a fatal quarrel, the violent hands of wicked men, or the hand

of vengeance from a holy God, may long before this time twelvemonth smite you to the earth, and send you to the grave without warning, and to judgment without preparation. "They take the timbrel and harp and rejoice at the sound of the organ: they spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. How oft is the candle of the wicked put out: and how oft cometh their destruction upon them? They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away. One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet."

In the conclusion of my discourse, I divide the congregation into three classes. The first will include those young men, and I hope they are not a few, who are living in the fear of God, and walking in the ways of true godliness. Happy, thrice happy youth! your obligations to divine grace are immense and eternal. You have made a blissful exchange of the pleasures of sin and folly, for those of wisdom and piety. Be grateful to God for the mercy with which he has visited you. Still continue "to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Remember that you are not already perfect; but forgetting the things that are behind, press towards the mark of the prize of your high calling, in Christ Jesus: adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things. Be not high minded, but fear. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. Flee youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Be not ashamed of Christ. Disregard the sneers which your piety will not fail to bring down upon you, from those who think it strange that you run not to the same excess of riot,

speaking evil against you. Their scorn is your honour. They envy you in their heart, while they persecute you with their lips. They regard you with much the same feelings as Satan did our first parents, when he looked at them through the gate of Eden, before the fall. Be holy, happy, and useful; and let your character appear surrounded and adorned with this triple glory of religion. You have raised our expectations; support them. You have begun our joy, fulfil it. Persevere, increase, go on to perfection.

The second class includes those who are moral, but not pious: of these also there are many. There are young men, adorned with every amiable disposition, every social virtue, every relative excellence, who want only one thing to finish their character. But that one —O! how important, how necessary—true religion. There may be morality without religion, though there cannot be religion without morality. Morality is the duty which we owe to ourselves and our fellow creatures: religion is the duty which we owe to God. Morality is a right disposition to man; religion a right disposition towards God. Although the latter involves the former, the former does not necessarily include the latter. Alas, alas! that moral men should not also be religious. This appears to have been the case with the young man mentioned in the gospel, of whom it is said that Jesus loved him: he was eminently moral, but could not endure the self-denying religion of the cross, and with all his virtues fell short of heaven.

What you need, young men, is regeneration of heart by the Holy Ghost. You must be born again of the Spirit, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. You must have a new heart, a holy bias, a spiritual disposi-

tion, a heavenly tone of feeling. You must be brought to fear God as your habitual principle of action, and to love him supremely, as the master passion of your soul. Under a deep conviction of sin, you must have repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ. You must be justified by faith and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You must be sanctified by the truth and Spirit of God. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The grace of God which brings salvation, must teach you not only to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, but to live soberly, righteously and godly, in the present evil world. Morality alone will not do. It may save you from the miseries of vice, but not from the bitter pains of eternal death. It will bring its own reward: but that reward ends with the present world. It will improve your temporal interests as men; it will lessen your condemnation as sinners, but it will not entitle you to the character of Christians here, nor will it be followed by glory, honour, immortality and eternal life hereafter. It is extremely probable that if you are satisfied with being moral, to the neglect of piety, you may not long retain even your virtue. Temptations may assail you, too powerful for anything short of that religion which engages Omnipotence for our defence. In one unguarded moment, you may become the victims of those spiritual enemies which lie in wait to deceive you. It is God alone that can preserve you: but without piety, it is not likely that you will enjoy his protection. It is but just that he should give up to themselves those who seek not by prayer his counsel and assistance.

I am addressing many who are exposed to imminent danger; since being only sojourners in the town, as

clerks or apprentices, they are removed from beneath the inspection of a father's wakeful eye, and unless they live beneath the roof of their employer, have no other restraint upon their conduct than that which is imposed by their own principles. Yours is a situation pregnant with peril. Hitherto you may have happily escaped the "corruptions that are in the world through lust." But beware, I beseech you, of the evils that surround you. Avoid bad company! "a companion of fools shall be destroyed." "Evil communications corrupt good manners." One sinful associate may drag you down from the moral elevation on which you now stand, into the vortex of ruin in which he is sinking. Rather have no companions than bad ones. Acquire a taste for reading, and through the medium of books converse with the mighty dead. Your company may be courted; but receive with cautious reserve and suspicion every advance that is made for your society. Determine to be the friend of no man in whom you do not perceive the most unequivocal proofs of moral worth. Shun a wicked companion as you would an assassin. If you have been too unguarded in this respect, and united yourselves with associates whose conduct is in the least degree immoral, shake them off without hesitation, as you would a viper from your hand, or a scorpion from your lap. If you continue their acquaintance you may be expected soon to be as bad as they are. Wicked men have an infernal ambition to render others as corrupt as themselves. They are like the devil, as in many other respects, so particularly in this, "they go about seeking whom they may devour." But above all things, fear God. My first and last advice to you is, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." Religion will

guard you in danger; guide you in difficulty; comfort you in solitude. In your Bible you will always find a companion, when the hours and cares of business are over; and though you are not at home, religion will procure you companions whose society will not corrupt, and pleasures which will neither surfeit nor pollute.

The third class of young men which I would address are those whose character I have described, and whose sins I have reproved. Unhappy youths! may this plain and faithful address produce the desired effect. Pause and ponder. Look at your course, and consider whither it is conducting you. Sin is your enemy for both worlds; it is alike the foe of your body and your soul. It will corrupt your health. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue, yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him." Sin will blast all your temporal interests, by producing the habits which lead to poverty, and hindering the virtues which have a tendency to wealth. Dissipation, intemperance, and debauchery, must have resources, and if these cannot be supplied by the ordinary proceeds of honest industry, extravagance may soon be followed with robbery; this with infamy and death. Young men, let the recent events which have circulated such horror through the country, be felt as a solemn warning to you. Let the fate, I cannot say the grave, for he was denied one, of the desperately hardened murderer, who has the last week expired on the gallows, be as a flaming beacon to warn you against sin. Say not, that amidst all your gaieties and vices, you are never likely to commit his crimes. We read

in Scripture of the deceitfulness of the human heart, as well as of its desperate wickedness. And wherein lies its deceitfulness? In leading men on step by step in the career of vice, till it has conducted them infinite lengths beyond the spot to which it first directed their attention. When the prophet of the Lord disclosed to Hazael his future career of evil, the Syrian exclaimed, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing." His indignation was honest at the time, but his heart was deceitful; and he lived to be worse than Elisha had foretold. There was a time when the felon lately executed would probably have shuddered at the idea of wantonly torturing a fly, but he lived to perpetrate, without pity or remorse, the crime of murdering a man. Sin is deceitful, young men. No one becomes vicious all at once. The way of a transgressor is like that of a stone down hill, which when it is once set going, moves at every revolution with accelerated speed. He begins with little sins, and these lead on to greater ones; from acts he proceeds to habits: from habits to inveterate custom; from custom to glorying in his wickedness. Vice first is pleasing, then it grows easy, then delightful, then frequent, then habitual, then confirmed; then the man is impenitent, then he is obstinate, then he resolves never to repent, and then he is damned.

"Let the wicked then forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; (and for his encouragement I would add,) let him return unto God, for he will abundantly pardon. With the Lord there is mercy that he may be feared, and plenteous redemption that he may be sought unto. Even yet God waiteth to be gracious. Jesus Christ is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Pause, consider,

repent, believe, and be holy. Admire the patience of God which has borne with you so long. Be thankful that you have not been cut off in your sins, and sent to that world, where mercy is never dispensed by God, nor hope indulged by man. From this time, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Read the Scriptures daily; attend the solemnities of public worship; pray to God for the assistance of the Holy Spirit, without which you can do nothing; forsake evil company; avoid all occasions and excitements to sin; consider your end; meditate constantly upon the approaching day of judgment. "Seeing all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Amen.

THE SIN OF SCOFFING AT RELIGION EXPOSED.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED IN CARRS LANE MEETING HOUSE,

JULY 18TH AND AUGUST 1ST, 1824.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

In one of the pamphlets published in defence of the drama against the remarks contained in the preceding sermon, the following discourse was very offensively attacked as a plagiarism from the sermon of Archbishop Tillotson on the same text. But a comparison of the two will show that the one is not founded on the other, and the passages really borrowed were marked as far as practicable as quotations. One would have thought the reference to the Archbishop's sermon might have been sufficient to prevent the imputation.

2 Peter iii, 3.

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts."

As in the natural world, the day light does not prevent the evils injurious to the body, so in the spiritual world, the most perfect revelation of divine truth does not put a stop to the errors and vices which endanger the soul. Even the Christian dispensation (called here the last days, because the consummation of every other that preceded it, and itself the closing series of celestial communications), is insufficient, notwithstanding its internal glory and external evidence, to abash the audacious spirit of infidelity, and to silence the scoffing tongue of the scorner.

At the time of St. Peter's writing this epistle, the disciples of Christ were exposed to the attacks of the Epicureans among the Gentiles, and of the Sadducees among the Jews, both of whom ridiculed the doctrines of the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, the destruction of the world, and a future state of reward or punishment. From the very frequent allusions made to scorners throughout the Old Testament, it is evident that such characters were by no means uncommon in the Jewish nation: and this atheistical

temper still continues to infest the world under the superior light of Christianity. In the language of the text, the apostle with great severity rebukes this profane disposition, and resolves it into its real cause, the unsubdued depravity of those by whom it is indulged; "there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." As this sin is lamentably common in the present age, I have thought it necessary to call your attention to the subject, and to put you upon your guard against its pernicious influence and impious attacks.

I. I shall give you a representation of the nature of the vice itself, and shall trace it through its various forms and modes of operation. I am not going to set either myself or you, my friends, against the fair, dispassionate, reverential discussion of religious truth. Christianity, notwithstanding her heavenly origin, not only allows, but invites examination, and in this respect stands sublimely opposed to Mahometanism, which never reasons in its own defence, but prohibits and punishes every attack made upon it, and all investigation of its claims, and builds itself by force on ignorance and credulity; as if aware that the most limited privilege of discussion would end in its destruction. It is not the serious enquirer, or the sober disputant, that I complain of, let his objections be raised against whatever doctrines they may; but the individual who treats the subject with a spirit of levity, derision and contempt; who offer sneers instead of arguments, and appeals to the risible, rather than to the intellectual faculties of mankind.

In some instances this unhappy and unholy disposition goes so far as to despise every kind of religion,

natural as well as revealed, and comes out in the appalling form of atheism, which ridicules the ideas of the existence of a God and a future state; and assigning to man no other period of existence than the present life, takes from him all responsibility, and eventually extinguishes every moral principle of his soul. It has, indeed, been questioned whether such a being as a speculative atheist exists; without taking upon me to decide this question, I know that many practical ones are almost everywhere to be found: men who treat all religion with unconcealed contempt, whether they speak from or against conviction, whether they are led into sin by a perverted judgment, or in their impious mirth oppose the ineffaceable sentiments of their own hearts. Having relieved themselves from the restraint of principle and conscience, they look down with affected pity and undisguised scorn upon the poor slaves who consider themselves as acting under inspection and amenable for their conduct. They treat with endless derision the bondage of those whom they represent as voluntarily loaded with the fetters of superstition, who though they have only to assert their liberty to be free, instead of daring to break the chains which artful priests and designing tyrants have imposed upon their minds, are tamely submitting to the imposition, and grovelling in abject fear at the feet of their cruel taskmasters. With such men it is matter of constant merriment that any should be so silly as for the reversionary happiness of a future state, to deny themselves the gratification of their appetites, and the indulgence of their propensities in the present world. Their motto is, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Every moral principle, every holy virtue, every religious practice is treated with scorn by them;

they deride all who support the claims of piety, and represent everything however vile, impure, or profane, as lawful or indifferent.

In other cases, the scorner appears in the character of a deist, who, while he professes to believe the truth, and to submit to the obligations of natural religion, attacks the system of divine revelation with all the power of his wit, and loads the disciples of Christ with all the weight of his scorn. He reviles the Scriptures as forgeries, and ridicules those who profess to believe them, as fanatics or hypocrites. It is in his eyes the excess of credulity and folly to allow the conscience to be bound, the passions to be restrained, and the life to be guided, by such palpable and refutable impostures. Yet one cannot help wondering at the effrontery of those infidels who talk about the silliness of believing in the Bible, and who represent it as a book capable of enslaving only the weak and credulous. Have they forgotten that this book, in their opinion so easily detected in its falsehoods, and so worthy to be despised for its absurdities, was really admitted to be divine and true by Bacon, Newton, and Boyle; by Milton, Locke, and Johnson. It is curious to hear the flippancy with which many witlings talk of the weakness and credulity of all who believe in the truth of divine revelation, and to see with what scorn they look upon the multitude of believers; a body which, though it embraces very many of the poor and illiterate, yet has comprehended the sublimest poets, the profoundest philosophers, and the most learned scholars that ever lived in the most enlightened ages and in the best informed nations. One should think that such names as those just mentioned had dignity enough to screen themselves, and all

associated with them in opinion, from the sneer of contempt. Surely, surely, the very hem of the garment, the extremity of the skirt of such a genius as Bacon, Newton, or Milton, might be a sufficient covering from derision for the multitude of weaker minds who flee to it for a shelter from the charge of credulity and the shower of taunts and sneers with which such a charge is often attended.

But there are many, who, though they have all the malignity of deism, have not its desperate hardihood. They are infidels without avowing it; they despise revelation without professing to reject it; they laugh at it, but do not, because they cannot, argue against it. In the grand conflict between Christianity and infidelity, they carry on a sort of guerilla warfare. They have neither the skill nor the accoutrements of regular troops, but they can skirmish, and it is admitted that in a certain way they do much execution. I mean the men who, under a profession of general respect for revelation, are ever busying themselves in finding out, exposing, and ridiculing, what their shallow and unsanctified minds imagine to be difficulties, absurdities, and objections. How will they divert a circle with witty, ironical, or ludicrous remarks, upon some of the scripture narratives, or some of the scripture characters. The account of Jonah and the fish, and the sins of David, with other things of a similar nature, are converted by them into matter of endless ridicule. Two topics there are, necessarily and closely connected with revealed truth, of fearful mystery, of awful gloom, and of dreadful reality, which have been employed, perhaps more than any others, by such scoffers to season their mirth, and to give a relish to their sinful jokes; and these are, the state

of punishment prepared for the wicked and the existence of the devil. Even the purgatorial fire, or disciplinary chastisement, of the Romanists, much more the hell of the Scriptures, a state of eternal torments; and Satan, whether a real existence, or even if he were only a personification of evil; are subjects far too dreadful to become the occasions of merriment and diversion. But, unhappily, the monkish legends of Popery, replete as they are with all that can shock the reason and offend the sober piety of an enlightened Christian, have furnished so many absurd, ludicrous, and monstrous stories on these appalling themes, that the most dreadful of all possible topics have become more than any thing, the subject of sport.

Much unhallowed ridicule is thrown by some on what are considered by us as the most sublime and important doctrines of revelation; I mean the trinity of persons in the Godhead, and the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. I speak not now of those who, in a dignified, dispassionate, and reverential manner, discuss by argument these high subjects. Men of enlarged minds, and of high moral worth there are, who differ from us on these doctrines, and who express that difference in respectful and argumentative language, who disdain to offer a sneer for a reason, and who in the disputant merge not the character of the gentleman; to such opponents we listen with respect, and have only to regret that they err, in our opinion, on subjects of vital importance. Far different is the conduct of others of their party, who substitute, perhaps conveniently enough, ridicule for reasoning, and sneers for arguments. We include the latter only in the company of the scoffers; the former are too dignified to deserve

the appellation, and we, I trust, are too candid to asperse them with the imputation.

The scorner will not unfrequently be found avowing his belief in the important articles which I have just mentioned, while, at the same time, he ridicules the only legitimate influence and valuable results of these doctrines. All that deep contrition, that earnestness of soul, that spirituality of mind, that separation from the world, that cautious abstinence from sin, that devout attendance upon religious services which the Word of God enjoins, and the very nature of religion requires, are sometimes treated with the most unrestrained ridicule by men who profess at the same time to be firm believers in all the important articles of the Christian scheme. If the Word of God be true, it is impossible to possess religion without being earnest; for religion is a thing of the heart; it has reference to eternity; it is a contest for immortality; a trial and preparation for everlasting ages; and to be lukewarm, careless, indifferent, on such a subject, is the most monstrous absurdity. The anxious, earnest, diligent Christian, is the only consistent one. Yet this is the religion against which the whole artillery of scorn is directed, and every offensive epithet is cast: this is the religion which is designated by the opprobrious names of nauseating cant, disgusting hypocrisy, whining Methodism, and Puritanic fanaticism. We are commanded by the law of our being, as rational creatures, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind; we are enjoined by our divine Lawgiver to strive to enter in at the straight gate; to subdue every guilty passion, and restrain every sinful exercise of the senses; to be pure even in the very inmost recesses of our mind; to

make the salvation of the soul the chief object of pursuit; and we are admonished by his apostles to give ourselves to prayer; to be spiritually minded; to set our affections on things above; to mortify the deeds of the body; to avoid the very appearance of evil; to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Yet, no sooner does a man comply with these injunctions, or attempt to do so, than he is pointed out by the finger of scorn as an object of ridicule, at whom, as he passes along, every one may fling the epithet of Methodist or saint, and raise against him the silent sneer or the broad loud laugh.

Has not every one, who, in the present age, dares to be in earnest about religion, subjected himself to attacks of this kind? Has not the term saint, that highest appellation which can be given to man or glorified spirit, of kindred meaning with that attribute of the Deity which, as his chosen title, is proclaimed in the continual cry of the cherubim and seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" has not, I say, this term been bandied about society as a term of reproach? and have not the saints, as they are sneeringly called, been held up to ridicule in all places, from the highest seats in parliament to the benches of the alehouse? Have not senators themselves stooped so low, even amidst the dignity of debate, as to repeat the low jokes of the drunkard's song? Holy Lord God Almighty! what infatuation has come upon the enemies of religion, that abandoning the names of reproach invented by men, they should at length have selected one consecrated by every page of revelation, applied to every being in glory, and ascribed to thee by those adoring at thy footstool as the greatest of all thy perfections!

What blindness has fallen upon their understanding, that they can find no term less august to affix as a brand upon the character of a good man! What is their perverseness and confusion of judgment, that they should have been thus led to utter the greatest compliments when they intended only the greatest contempt! Mistaken men! learn the meaning of the term before ye employ it as a word of reproach. And ye objects of their scorn, be it your ambition to deserve the appellation, and your honour to bear it without a blush before the world.

Another way of scoffing at religion (and it is by no means an uncommon one), is to pitch upon the extravagances and imperfections of good men, and to expose them to public ridicule and contempt. It may be their imperfections are only eccentricities, mere dust upon the petals of the flower, but not a canker at its roots, which candour would overlook or conceal, in consideration of the genuine excellence with which they are associated. It is a very easy achievement to make corrupt minds laugh at the most admirable qualities, when they happen to be connected with trivial eccentricity; for he who laughs at the garment, will soon be led by an easy transition to despise the wearer, however respectable. But how hateful is the malignity which delights to throw all the valuable and praiseworthy parts of the character into the shade of one ludicrous trait.

It is a miserable device, which many have had recourse to, to select the absurdities of fanaticism and the hollow pretences of hypocrisy, as they have been exhibited in some false professors, and thus to raise a prejudice against all genuine religion. We are told that it is not rational piety they deride, but only the disgust-

ing excesses of enthusiasm and insincerity. This mask, however, is too ill constructed to conceal the visage, and this veil too thin to disguise the form of the scorner. Hypocrisy in any thing needs no effort employed against it to render it hateful, there being no vice which is more generally or more justly abhorred; and as for fanaticism, it may be left to itself, for it will soon expire without any effort to extinguish it. But fanaticism is a term so undefined, that it is a difficult matter to regulate its application; and, on the other hand, the phrase "rational piety" is, with those who use it, like the bed of Procrustes, to which every one was fitted by violence, either by being stretched or lopped. "Even admitting that there were opinions so replete with absurdity, and so contradictory to common sense, that it seems below the dignity of reason to undertake the refutation of them, yet of what service can be ridicule even in this case. Whatever gives birth to opinions really monstrous, it is plain that strong prejudice alone keeps them alive, which even impresses on them a sacred character. To endeavour to laugh men out of such prejudices, is to confirm them the more in them; as their conversion is never likely to be brought about by such means as must inspire them with horror. Rather let kindness and persuasion remove the prejudice, and then the error will be dispelled of course."

To mock all religion because of the vices of its false professors, is an action the weakness of which is not exceeded even by its wickedness. If candour be a virtue, what shall be said of that man's conduct, who, because he has proved the falsehood of some mere pretenders to superior sanctity, involves the whole community of Christians in the odious charge of hypocrisy. Would

it be fair, would it be reasonable, to ridicule conjugal fidelity because some, under strong professions of this virtue, have concealed adultery? Or would it be candid, to say that all who make loud professions of loyalty, are traitors in heart because some have been found to be so? Perhaps religion has had no more counterfeits than any thing else that is truly excellent; and if it had, this is only a proof of its superior value, for is not what is most valuable most often counterfeited? To scoff at it on this ground, then, is not only the proof of a wicked heart, but also of a weak head. This class of scorners (and it is a very numerous one), is seated on the lowest form in the school of irreligion, and is composed of the feeblest, youngest children, who, as yet, are unable to lisp in argument, and have only learnt to laugh.

But it is now time to enquire where and when the practice of scoffing is indulged in. In the theatre, where, besides the mockery of the lessons of religion, which, more or less, runs through the whole contexture of dramatic representation, plays are acted which were originally written, and are still performed with the design of bringing all scriptural piety into contempt. The theatre is the very seat of the scornful, where he sits first as a learner, till he becomes proficient enough to appear in the character of a teacher. It may be very truly affirmed, that if infidels teach men to argue against religion, players instruct them to laugh at it.

How often the social circle is the scene of this unhallowed sport, and the entertainment of the convivial party is heightened by profane ridicule. Religion, like her divine Author, when he was led into Pilate's hall to be a laughing stock to the Roman soldiers, is introduced

only to furnish merriment for the company. One calls her an impostor, practising her arts on the credulity of mankind; another holds up the vices of her false disciples as chargeable upon her; a third tells a ludicrous anecdote of one of her sincere and honourable votaries: thus derided by all, with no one to speak on her behalf, she stands, like the Man of Sorrows, the silent object of derision, the swearer's jest, the drunkard's song, yet still majestic and dignified amidst surrounding scorn. How much of tavern and alehouse mirth is derived from this impious source. What a supply of merriment would be cut off from the sons of Belial if religion and all the subjects connected with it were suddenly, by some mysterious power operating upon their minds, either forgotten or dreaded by them. Infatuated and miserable men! Can ye find nothing less sacred than this to give a relish to your wine? Will nothing less poisonous serve for infusion into your cups? Has the social circle no charms or power to please unless the scoffer be there? Has wit no pungency, genius no brilliancy, satire no sting, irony no point, humour no pleasantry, jesting no spirit, except scoffing at religion be practised? Must the voice of the scorner rouse the slumbering genius of mirth, and is all flat and insipid till his perverted fancy yield the salt? Is it not enough that ye can be drunkards and swearers, but ye must be calumniators also? and will nothing less serve as the objects of your scandal than piety and the pious? This is, indeed, being in haste to be wicked. You are the very men of whom the prophet speaks, "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope? Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and

light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. Therefore as fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as the dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."

How saturated with the sin of scoffing at religion are many of the publications, and much of the periodical literature of the present day. How frequently is every moral and spiritual sensibility of the religious mind offended in the course of its reading by some irreverend allusion, profane remark, contemptuous taunt, or unholy witticism connected with religion. Authors and editors, who should know how to cater for the public, pay to the taste of their readers the wretched compliment of supposing that the readiest way to work themselves into favour, is to furnish entertainment founded on distorted views of religion. Popular novelists have attempted to give a charm to their tales by exhibiting piety in union with the extravagances and uncouth phraseology of religionists of the seventeenth century: and metrical writers, taking up the buffoonery of Butler (doomed by Providence to go without requital by his master or his party), have endeavoured by exaggerating the excesses of injudicious zeal, to perpetuate prejudice against the sincere, thought indiscreet piety with which they were associated. To use the words of an eloquent writer, in reference to the present times, "The dragon has cast forth from his mouth such a flood of heresy and mis-

chief, that Egypt, in the worst of her plagues, was not covered with more loathsome abominations. Creatures which we did not suspect to have existed, have come forth from their retreats, some soaring into the regions of impiety on vigorous pinions, others crawling on the earth, with a slow and sluggish motion, only to be tracked through the filthy slime of their impurities. We have seen writers of every order, from the mighty Polyphemuses of the north, to the contemptible dwarfs," shall I say, of our own town; "men of every party, infidels, churchmen, and dissenters, a motley crew, who have no one thing in common, except their antipathy to religion, join hands and hearts on the occasion: a deadly taint of impiety has blended them into one common mass, as things the most discordant while they are living substances, do very well to putrify together. We are not at all alarmed at this extensive combination; it will no doubt do much present and partial mischief, but it will be ultimately productive of much general and permanent good. Mankind will not be long at a loss to determine where the truth lies, when they see on one hand a visible fear of God, a constant appeal to his oracles, a solicitude to promote the salvation of mankind; and on the other, an indecent levity, an unbridled insolence, an unblushing falsehood, a hard, unfeeling pride, together with a manifest aim to render the Scriptures of no authority, and religion of no effect.*

Oh who can reflect without unutterable anguish upon the dreadful prostitution of those stupendous talents, which have lately been withdrawn for ever from the world. Alas! that an individual who for his genius was worthy to be associated with Spenser and Milton, should

* Strictures on "Zeal without Innovation," by Mr. Hall.

for his infidelity be classed with Voltaire, and Hume, and Paine. That man cannot have one spark of mind who is not willing to confess the transcendent powers of Byron, nor can he have one spark of piety who does not deplore the mischief which those powers have effected in the world of morals. If to pay homage to talents be one of the proofs and noblest exercises of an intellectual nature, it is no less incumbent on a moral agent to worship at the shrine of virtue. While therefore we admire the intellectual beauties of this unequalled author, let us not forget that they were associated with moral deformities no less disgusting and appalling. If splendid talents alone are to be the objects of unmingled admiration, not only when they are destitute of piety and morality, but even when employed against them, who shall measure or limit the raptures with which we should applaud the genius of Satan. "I regard talents with too sincere an admiration, I love poetry with a devotion too enthusiastic, wantonly to impeach the one or the other, but there are things of higher moment than talents, of dearer concern than poetry. The authority of revelation, the sanctity of religion, the interests of morality, the purity of love, the chastity of woman, the sacredness of honour, and the glow of patriotism, are all of paramount consideration. Society may flourish and be refined without poetic genius, but it cannot exist without virtue, nor be happy without religion; and when poetic genius arms itself against the body politic, and wages war with the human family, I am determined for one, to make common cause with my country, with my species."*

* See an admirable Sermon just published by Dr. Styles, on the character of Lord Byron's Works, which I most cordially recommend to the perusal of all the admirers of this great but most dangerous poet.

Byron was the inveterate enemy of Christianity: sometimes opposing it by the most blasphemous metaphysical speculations, which like dark thunder clouds, darted their flashes against its deathless interests; while at others, he exposed it to the ridicule of witlings and the mirth of fools, in all the malignity of scorn and derision.

II. I shall consider the causes of scoffing. This vice has less to plead in excuse for itself than almost any other that the depravity of man can lead him to commit. It is at once the greatest crime, and originates in the least temptation. When Satan urges men on to other sins he presents the lure of some appropriate gratification; to ambition he offers the prospect of honour; to avarice, injustice, or extortion, riches; to lust, sensual indulgences; to malice, revenge; but to the scorner he offers neither riches, nor honour, nor sensuality; nothing, literally nothing, but the laughter of fools, and "the reputation perhaps of having said that wittily, which no wise man would have said at all." The scorner is a poor, silly hireling, who serves the devil for nought; of whom it may be emphatically said, "the wages of his sin is death," nothing but death; his broad farce ends in the deepest tragedy, since it terminates in the eternal perdition of the miserable performer. "What folly," says Archbishop Tillotson, "is that for a man to offend his conscience to please his humour, and for his jest, to lose the two best friends he has in the world, God and his own soul." What then is the cause of this vice? There are many subordinate and proximate ones. Of these, pride and an unmortified opinion of self takes the lead. There is no disposition more apparent in the scoffer than this; "proud and haughty scorner," says

Solomon, "is his name." Neither that splendour of evidence amidst which religion reveals and proves her celestial origin, nor the assent of the greatest and best of men in all ages to its truth, is sufficient to convince such an individual that it is worthy of his regard. The reverence of ages, and of nations, is not enough to check his scorn, or to awe him into respect. His conduct is dictated by a disgusting conceit of his own powers, united with an insufferable contempt of the talents of others.

Scoffing is sometimes the result of a prevailing and indecent levity of mind, an habitual and indulged frivolity, which alike indisposes and unfits a man for any serious pursuit; an unbridled disposition to convert everything, not excepting the most solemn and momentous subjects, into matter of mirth and ridicule. There are persons who scarcely ever have a season in which wisdom is the regent of the soul; but whose whole character and life are abandoned to the dominion of folly, and whose time to laugh is the whole period of their waking existence.

A silly affectation of novelty, combined with a wish to be thought superior to the terrors of superstition, leads in many cases to the sin of ridiculing piety. Not a few are persuaded to engage in the practice for the sake of indulging a talent for wit or humour. A talent for genuine wit as distinguished from burlesque, is a rare accomplishment; and still rarer is its proper application. When employed in confounding error, and abashing wickedness, it is invaluable; but how shocking is it to see this gift of heaven turned against its Divine Author, by being employed to ridicule his image. Yet this is the most beloved and valued accomplishment of the

scoffer; to raise the laugh, and secure applause, he loses no opportunity, spares no character, and excepts no subject. To throw off the sparks of wit he would not scruple to "set his tongue on fire of hell." Dangerous and destructive sport! Such flames are more easily kindled than extinguished, and often consume the individual who ignites them.

Many are led on to assume the character of a scorner, by the power of fashion and the contagion of evil company; so dangerous is it to associate with the wicked, and so difficult to resist the influence of example. Many an individual has been emboldened to scoff while in company, who when alone, has trembled at the recollection of his sin.

Inability to attack religion in any other way induces some to assail it with their scorn. This is an easy method of manifesting their hatred: the pigmy mind that cannot wield an argument can throw a sneer; and he who could as soon hope to fly as to reason, may still have talent enough to laugh, or to retail the jokes which others have formed: and indeed, as men when their minds are heated by their passions, say things more smart than they could utter in their cooler moods, so persons of dull intellect when irritated by dislike of piety, do really utter sayings of greater cleverness than they could otherwise aspire to.

But the chief source of scoffing is that which the apostle has mentioned in the text, "Scoffers, walking after their own lusts." Jude has traced the sin to the same source, "But beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time walking after their own ungodly lusts."

It was said by an infidel of former times, that when reason is against a man, then a man will be against reason: and it may with equal, if not with greater propriety, be said, that when religion is against a man, then will a man be against religion. The truths and the precepts of revelation are enemies to pride of intellect, and depravity of heart; and it is matter of little surprise that they who cannot be reconciled to humility and purity, should scorn the system which enforces such virtues. As those children in a school who have most to fear from a master's displeasure, are the most ready to treat him with ridicule behind his back, and as the whip will be generally treated with most merriment by those who are most in danger of its lashes, so they who have most to dread from religion will be more forward than others to scorn it; and they who are in the greatest danger of the quenchless fire, will like other madmen, be the first to sport with the flames. Religion frowns upon every sin; rebukes, accuses, and condemns every sinner. A man cannot swear, or take the name of God in vain, or break the Sabbath, or indulge in the least act of uncleanness, but this representative of God in our world, censures the sin, and threatens the sinner. Like the angel of the Lord resisting the hireling prophet in his path, it opposes itself to the transgressor in his way, and with a drawn sword and a voice of thunder, exclaims, proceed at thy peril. Interrupted, perplexed, and resisted in his iniquitous career; rendered uneasy, and less capable of enjoying his lusts, the sinner becomes angry, and like a rude youth impeded in lawless sport, he derides his monitor, and abuses him with ill names.

And for the same reason the scorner derides the righteous: their example is a constant reproof, accusa-

tion, and condemnation of him. Their holy conduct wounds his conscience, just as sunbeams do the weak and disordered eye: he cannot go on so easily in his sins while they are present; hence he hates them, as Cain did Abel; but being restrained by the laws from offering violence to their persons, he vents his rage in scoffs and sneers upon their character. The sum of the whole matter is this: a man says there is no God, because he wishes there were none: he scorns spiritual religion, because spiritual religion condemns him: he is an infidel because he is a sinner: he is a scoffer because he is an infidel. This then is the true and ultimate source of scoffing, an unrenewed, unsanctified mind; a heart that hates God, and abhors his image. Some men would scoff at religion no more if they could exchange Christianity for the mythology of Greece and Rome. Give them but the profligate Jupiter and Venus to patronise their uncleanness; and the drunken Bacchus to sanctify their inebriety; and the laughing Momus to consecrate their folly; in lieu of the Holy Lord God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and they would find it no difficulty to live in terms of good fellowship with such a religion as this. But the religion of the Bible is too humbling for the pride of their intellect, too holy for the corruptions of their heart, too strict and too rigid for that liberty in which they would indulge in their lives, and they cannot endure it: and being unable to confound it by logic, or overwhelm it by eloquence, they treat it with derision.

In some cases there is reason to believe that scoffing may be traced up to fear, united with dislike. The scorner secretly trembles at the idea of a God, and of a judgment to come. In spite of himself he fears that

there may be a reality in religion, and if there be, what is to become of him. The poor creature, like a scared child whistling as he passes through a churchyard to keep up his courage, or laughing at the story of a ghost, to conceal the palpitations of his heart, ridicules religion to allay, if possible, the rising alarms of his conscience, and to disengage himself from the terrors of his affrighted imagination. May I not appeal to some who read this for the truth of what I say, when I affirm, that the sneering countenance is oftentimes the impious mask of a cowardly heart and of a trembling conscience.

III. Let me now exhibit to you the characters of this vice.

1. It is irrational. Think not there is anything manly or courageous in the conduct of the scorner. It is a practise in which the weakest and silliest of mankind have indulged; to which the drunkard, when his reason is half drowned in his cups, and he himself is reduced to a driveller, resorts for his sport; to which brainless fops and witless heads have had recourse, as the easiest way to gain a modicum of reputation as clever persons. Religion, whether taken as a whole or regarded in its component parts, is a subject of infinite moment; it involves the present duties and the eternal destinies of the universe: it respects man as an immortal creature, and influences his happiness for everlasting ages. Compared with this, the most momentous questions which have interested, agitated, and divided the greatest geniuses and the profoundest intellects, are subjects of small and evanescent importance. To sport with such a thing is consummately, preposterously absurd, and the scoffer stands upon the confines of idiocy. No argument is necessary beyond his own act to prove that

he is a fool; nor is any eloquence necessary to illustrate his folly. One need not do anything more to proclaim the greatness of a man's absurdity, than to say that he scoffs at religion. Admitting that a man has proved to his own satisfaction that there is neither a God nor a future state, there is something so horribly dreadful in his calamitous discovery, so gloomy and so wretched in his system, that instead of looking with derision on those of an opposite sentiment, he should be appalled and affrighted by the terrors of his own. An infidel ridicule others! What, when he has blotted out the idea of a powerful Creator, a wise Governor, a merciful Benefactor of the human race, and substituted in his place the misrule of chance: when he has sunk heaven and all its glories in the gloom of annihilation: that man find leisure from the misery of his own reflections to laugh at others who are cheering themselves with the consolations of religion! An atheist, if he have any sense of moral beauty, instead of being pleased with his creed, should start back with horror and affright from the progeny of his mind; and if he have any pity, instead of holding it up to the caresses of the world, should conceal it from observation, and restrain its operation as a demon born to curse mankind. Miserable creature! where is your rationality? where is your humanity? You cannot plead conscience for disturbing the lovely vision; for upon his own principles an atheist can have no conscience.

Nay, a scoffing temper is irrational, as it perfectly unfits the mind for the investigation of religion: it has its origin either in pride or levity; both of which disqualify us for the investigation of truth. A man given to merriment and scorn is ever seeking for wit, not for

truth; and will be so bent upon the former as most willingly to sacrifice the latter. Such a person is impatient and incapable of cool and sedate reflection. The calm exercise of the judgment is essential to our arriving at just opinions; and to expect calmness of judgment to be coupled with a disposition for scorn, is to expect that a feather will be still amidst a violent gust of wind. Ridicule is neither the test of truth in others, nor the way to obtain it for ourselves.

2. It is rude and uncivil. Though we may oppose the convictions of others, we ought not to do so with vulgarity and impertinence. Politeness demands that we treat those who differ from us with respect. "Be courteous to all," is a maxim of good breeding, and is essential to the well being of society. Now there is nothing more at variance with courtesy than scoffing. A decent respect is due to every man's convictions on the subject of religion, though they may be erroneous. "Whoever, therefore, instead of refuting errors by reason and temper, will treat in a contemptuous manner, that which in the eyes of others bears a sacred character, can only occasion scandal where he should attempt reformation, and must shew himself to be equally a stranger to good sense and to good manners." The scoffer, then, is not only not a Christian, but he is not even a gentleman; and is not merely unfit company for the wise and the good, but is meet only to associate with the very offscouring of the earth. His society is a nuisance to all except to men of like propensities: he is not only guilty in the sight of God, but offensive in the eyes of the better classes of his fellow creatures.

3. It is a most cruel and inhuman sin. A man who is really in earnest on the subject of religion, attaches to his

opinions an infinite importance. They are of more value in his eyes and are dearer to his heart than all he possesses upon earth. He would not only part with the last farthing of his property, but the last drop of his blood, rather than give them up. He is prepared for martyrdom, but not for apostacy. His sentiments may be erroneous in the opinion of others; but in his eyes they appear with the radiance of immutable truth: they may be entirely visionary, but they are beheld by him as eternal realities. Convince him if you can, that he is in error: but insult him not with mockery. This is more cruel than to scoff at the child which the mother holds in her arms and presses to her heart. Every man believes that there is a sanctity in his religious opinions; he considers them as a voice from the excellent glory; a response from the heavenly oracle; the very word of God; and to him it is the desecration of everything sacred, to hear them converted into matter of unhallowed scorn. Every jest that is thrown at his religion is a dagger piercing him to the heart, and the words of the scorner's tongue are sharper than drawn swords. Even admitting that he is in error, and that error is a deformity of mind, derision is not the way to remove it; and is not one whit more lawful, or one whit less cruel, than sporting with bodily deformity. Pity it and cure it if you can, but do not laugh at it. The scoffer has not the pity of a barbarian or a brute. Did he but consider how many there are, who amidst the vicissitudes and the trials of life, have no ray of consolation from any other source to fall upon their dreary path; no other shelter from the storms of time; no other hope amidst the wreck of fortune, than religion; would he follow them to their last refuge, and attempt to drive them by unhallowed scorn even from thence?

4. It is a most hardening vice. It marks a dreadful progress in the career of sin, a peculiar boldness of iniquity, and plainly proves that the transgressor is still going forward to greater obduracy of heart. That man who can allow himself the liberty of scoffing at religion, as a whole, or any part of it; either at any particular doctrine or any pious practice; who can allow himself to sneer at the righteous, or divert others with any thing pertaining to their character or conduct, has a conscience which is already partially benumbed, and which will soon be seared as with a hot iron. Nothing so rapidly hardens the heart as this; nothing closes so fast the avenues of moral perception, nor so completely petrifies the spiritual sensibilities. The mocker will soon be past feeling. Neither the terrors of justice, nor the loveliness of mercy make any impression on his heart: to admonish him is nearly a hopeless task. The sacred writers speak of a scorner as almost irreclaimable.

5. But its impiety in the sight of God surpasses all description. Religion is at once the production, the offspring and the image of Deity; and to scoff at religion therefore, is to scoff at God. When we ridicule a volume, we ridicule its author; when we laugh at the features of a portrait, we contemn the original; and to treat either piety or the pious with derision, is to throw our scorn at the heavens, and to insult the Deity. It is a sin to mock our fellow-creatures; our parents, for instance; or our sovereign. All loyal men join in reprobating the attempt to bring the monarch of the realm into contempt: to ridicule the vices of a bad king would be an offence against the well-being of the state, but to hold up to contumely the virtues of a good one,

is an outrage upon all loyalty and morality. How then shall we set forth the enormity of scoffing at God. Rash, impious, and puny mortal! canst thou find no other being to make the object of thy contempt, than Jehovah? Go, select some human genius sublime as Milton; some philosopher profound as Newton; some reasoner powerful as Bacon; some philanthropist benevolent as Howard; call up the mightiest of the dead from their graves; or go and perform thy apish tricks before their marble sepulchres, and where the wise and the great, and the good, never stand but with mute admiration and solemn awe, do thou shoot the lip, and point the finger, and utter words of scorn: this would be innocent and wise compared with scoffing at God, even as he is seen in the piety of the meanest of his saints. Didst thou ever think of the Divine Being? Has one most solemn thought of him ever penetrated thy soul? And without such thoughts, what is reason, what is mind, what is man? If thou hast thought of God, through what defect or infatuation of mind, or what depravity of heart, or what scaredness of conscience, hast thou been able to bring thyself to scoff at the Self-existent, Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient Spirit, at whose voice the very pillars of the earth tremble, and before whom the angels veil their faces, as if unable to look upon his all holy brightness? Wouldst thou have scoffed hadst thou been at Sinai? "If it were a thing we might be allowed to imagine, that the Divine Being were to manifest himself in some striking manner, as by some resplendent appearance at midnight, or by rekindling on an elevated mountain the long-extinguished fires of Horeb, and uttering voices from amidst those fires, would you ridi-

cule him then?" Miserable man! stop thy sport; first ask if it be lawful and safe. Think against whom thy scoffing is directed. Consider the attributes of Deity; think of all his glories and all his claims, and then ask which of them may be innocently and safely converted into matter of buffoonery. Be instructed that it is both safer and wiser to stand by the crater of a volcano, and laugh at the streams of burning lava as they are disgorged upon the mountain; or to place thyself under the cloud surcharged with a thousand thunderbolts, and laugh at the forked lightnings as they flash, than to mock at piety; for this is to mock at God, whose name should never be pronounced but with reverence, and the most distant thought of whom should never be presented to the soul without awing it at once into the posture of devotion.

6. It is a contagious and injurious vice. Scorners are the chief instruments of Satan, the promoters of his cause, his most zealous apostles, his most able advocates, and his most successful emissaries. Not content with perishing themselves, their object is to drag others into the vortex of their own ruin. They are a moral plague, the destruction that wasteth at noon-day; their breath is pestilential, and they carry an infected atmosphere about with them, which multitudes of the unwary inhale, and perish. Of all characters on the face of the earth, none is to be more shunned and dreaded than the facetious and witty man, who, by a perversion of his talents, turns the gifts of heaven against their Author. A person of humour, possessing a talent for mimicry, irony, and satire, who employs his powers to ridicule religion for the entertainment of others, is the most dangerous and destructive enemy to moral and religious

feeling, that walks the earth. His prototype is found no where but in the representation which our great bard has given of the serpent which tempted Eve. Of such an individual beware; his name is Apollyon (the destroyer).

IV. But it is time now to consider the punishment of the scorner. It is not uncommon, I believe, for those who are not thoroughly hardened in their sin, to feel even in this world some compunction of conscience after a season of profane raillery. Are there, tell me, scoffers, no midnight scenes of terror and self-reproach, when your head rests not on your pillow, and your conscience sleeps not in your bosom; when the recollection of your wicked jests and profane jokes is like the sting of a scorpion? How will this be increased on the bed of death. Ah! there, in spite of yourselves, you will be serious: fools you may live, but depend upon it, fools you will not die. Or if, like the infidel Hume, you should go joking through the dark valley of the shadow of death, the stoppage of your pulse will be the end of your merriment for ever. Let me present you with a few passages of holy writ, and let scoffers read them with attention:

"Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup."

"How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel,

and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices."

"Surely he scorneth the scorners; but he giveth grace unto the lowly."

"Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools."

"Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves."

Do you wish to know what is included in these fearful denunciations? It is not in my power completely to unfold them, or to tell how angry God is with such persons now, and how heavily he will inflict his wrath hereafter. But this much I can say: all that is contained in that fearfully comprehensive, but commonly abused word, hell; the wrath of God, remorse of conscience, and eternal despair, are the chief ingredients of this cup of torment. I cannot conceive of any character with whom Jehovah will be so awfully severe as the scoffer; his is the loftiest

height of vice, and his will be the lowest depth of punishment. God's patience in bearing with such impious creatures is wonderful; and his justice in punishing them will be in proportion. Oh! let me be any thing in the day of judgment, rather than a scoffer. He will be no mocker then. No. I see him hanging down his head like a bulrush; the haughtiness of his spirit all gone; trembling with consternation and dismay, he stands the object of divine scorn and indignation. His wit, his irony, his mimicry, avail him nothing there. He cannot play the buffoon amidst the fearful solemnities of the last judgment. Oh no; the poor trembling creature finds seeing God a far different thing from speaking of him. He is now at the bar of the Judge of the whole earth, waiting his eternal destiny, with certain and dreadful presages of what it will be. He is no longer surrounded with a circle of applauding auditors, who laugh at his wit; he no longer hears the inspiring chorus of folly; instead, he is before the tribunal of the God whom he insulted: on one side he sees the men looking on him with horror, whose ruin he accelerated by his scoffs; and, on the other, the holy objects on whom his scorn was vented. Aye, and how is he confounded at the latter. "Every thing in that day will combine to fill him with consternation; yet, methinks, neither the voice of the archangel, nor the trump of God, nor the dissolution of the elements, nor the face of the Judge itself, from which the heavens will flee away, will be so dismaying and terrible" as the sight of the saints of the most high God, whom having spurned, ridiculed, and mocked in the days of their humiliation, he will then behold with amazement, united with their Lord, covered with his glory,

and seated upon his throne. How will he be astonished to see them encompassed with so much majesty. How will he cast down his eyes in their presence. How will he curse his folly in treating them with so much ridicule, and forming such an inadequate idea of their principles and of their character. "Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him, and made no account of his labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say within themselves, This was he whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach: We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints." Wisdom v, 1—5 (Apocrypha).

And then, who shall tell the secrets of his prison, or conceive of what the scorner shall endure in the dark world of hell. There will be no saint near him there on whom to utter the effusions of his ridicule; no piety shall there offend his eyes; far as heaven is from hell shall these be removed out of his way. He has only to wait a little longer till he has reached the destiny on which his crime is impelling him, and he will inhabit a world where the hated, persecuted form of piety will trouble him no longer. Will he assuage his own agonies, or divert the companions of his misery with merry jokes upon the saints? Not one flash of wit will for a moment relieve the darkness of eternal night; not one sally of humour resist the oppression of eternal despair. Hell will be no longer a subject of merriment

when its torments are really felt; the burning lake, when the soul is plunged in its fiery billows, will be found something else and something worse than a mere scene of diversion for a wretched imagination to sport in; and devils, when the spirit is subjected to their tyranny, as tormentors, will be no longer images of recreation.

In the bottomless pit the scorner shall learn, if he learn not before, that there is truth in the Bible, and reality in religion. Poor creature! will he then seek relief from present remorse in looking back upon the scenes of his past life! Alas! alas! those scenes are the very sources of his anguish. Yes, the recollection of those jests, and witticisms, drolleries, and anecdotes, intended to make piety appear ridiculous, and the saints to appear contemptible, will fill him with torture a thousand times more intolerable than the venom of serpents and the stings of scorpions. Oh, for some Lethean draught to enable him to forget the past, and to convert it into a dreary blank. But even this would be insufficient, while near him were the miserable ghosts of those whom his scoffing helped on to perdition. Will they inspire him there with their shouts of applause? will they there remind him of the diversion he afforded them in their convivial hours, when he made them, in spite of their own convictions of its wickedness, laugh at religion? will they honour him as the best wit in all the gloomy regions of eternal night; what when he has been accessory to their damnation? No; but they will be like the subalterns and inferiors of a band of traitors beneath the fatal tree, who, instead of applauding the courage of their ringleader as they once did, load him with imprecations, and, with their last breath, curse the author of their ruin.

Scorner, beware, thou art playing a desperate game; thy soul is the stake, thy loss is certain, hell will be the consequence. The objects of thy attack are open to conviction, but are invulnerable to scorn. They have no prejudice which fortifies them against argument; but against the shafts of ridicule they are armed at every point, and calmly and silently leaving you to exhaust your quiver of its last arrow, will let your harmless weapons publish your defeat, and then, amidst the consciousness of innocence and of victory, content themselves with saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

By way of improvement, 1. "Let no man think the worse of religion, or any of its doctrines, because some are so bold as to despise them; for 'tis no disparagement to any person or thing to be laughed at; but only to deserve to be so. The most grave and serious matters in the world are liable to be abused." "A sharp wit may find something in the wisest or holiest man, whereby to expose him to the contempt of injudicious people. The gravest book that ever was written may be made ridiculous by applying the sayings of it to a foolish purpose. A jest may be obtruded upon anything; and therefore, no man ought to have the less reverence for the principles of religion, because profane wits can cast jokes upon them. Nothing is more easy than to take particular phrases and expressions out of the best book in the world, and to abuse them by forcing an odd and ridiculous sense upon them. But no wise man will think a good book foolish for this reason, but the man that abuseth it; nor will he esteem that to which everything is liable, to be a just exception against anything. At this rate we must despise all things; but surely the

better and the shorter way is to despise those who would bring anything worthy into contempt."*

2. I shall lay down some means of securing ourselves and our religion against the attacks of the scorner. The first that I would recommend is, an enlightened and enlarged acquaintance with the evidences of the truth of revealed religion, and of those particular doctrines, duties, and practices which we believe that it contains. No man is more likely to be attacked and vanquished by scorn, than he who has derived all his religion from imitation, and holds nothing by conviction. Our hope can then only be an anchor to the soul when it is held fast by the cable of conviction: this only can keep us safe amidst the winds of false doctrine, the gusts of ridicule, and the raging tempests of infidelity. Let us feel the force of the evidence by which religious truth is commended to our judgment, and experience a deep impression of it upon the heart, and we shall then be defended against the craft of sophistry and the sting of laughter. The scorner attacks in vain the man who knows the truth in the love of it, and is able to give a reason with meekness for the hope that is in him.

Let us seek that courage and decision which will enable us unblushingly to avow our attachment to religion, or to any of its opinions or practices, in the face either of ridicule or rage. There is a disposition, and it is both an enviable and a useful one, which the apostle calls "boldness in the faith." My brethren, adopt no sentiment till you have examined it. Try everything by Scripture: "examine all things, and then hold fast that which is good." Be sure that the shield of faith is on your left arm, and the sword of the spirit in your right

* See Archbishop Tillotson's Sermon on Scoffing at Religion.

hand, and then without a blush or a fear, avow the name of your great Captain; raise the battle cry of your cause, stand by your colours, and bid defiance to your enemies. Say, like Nehemiah in reply to the threats of his enemies, "Should such a man as I flee." Neither crouch in abject submission to any human authority, nor creep in silent fear of any human rage or scorn. Say in the language of our eloquent essayist, "This is my conviction and determination, as for the phantoms of fear, let me look them in the face; they will find I am not made of trembling materials; I shall firmly confront everything that threatens me in the prosecution of my purpose, and I am prepared to meet the consequences of it when it is accomplished. I am superior to opinion. I am not to be intimidated by reproaches, nor would your favour and applause be any reward for the sacrifice of my object. As you can do without my approbation, I can certainly do without yours; it is enough that I can approve myself; it is enough that I can appeal to the best authority in creation. I have something else to do than to trouble myself about your mirth. I care not if the whole neighbourhood laugh in a chorus; I should be sorry indeed to see or hear such a number of fools, but pleased enough to find that they did not consider me one of their number. Amuse themselves as they may by continuing to censure or to rail, I must continue to act." My brethren, thus act under the terrors of that fearful passage, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Cultivate all the dispositions, and practice all the

duties of a holy life. It is an invention and trick of infidelity, too shallow however to impose upon the mind of a thinking man, to make religion answerable for the vices which have been committed by its false professors, and to reproach whole systems of opinions, and whole bodies of believers, with the misconduct of a few individuals. Aware how little can be said against the evidences of Christianity, the spirit of error has tried to raise an argument from the vices of its professors; and in this it must be at once confessed and lamented, that it has been but too successful. The materials of the argument have been too readily found, and over those who wished to be convinced that religion was all a trick, the sophism has been too easily victorious. Let us then deprive the scorner of this his only weapon, and drive him from this his last resource. Let us exhibit Christianity in its constituent parts, as made up of love to God and love to man; in all its symmetry and beauty and force, as comprising "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." Let us leave no ground of objection, no matter of reproach, but what shall be found in us touching the law of our God. Like an unclouded sun, shining forth in a clear atmosphere, let our religion be seen, neither veiled by a cloud of suspicion, nor dimmed by a mist of imperfections. To the scoffs of the scorner let us present a blameless character, a holy life, and it shall be like a man's opposing a shield of brass to a serpent, at which the reptile may hiss, but in which he can find no entrance, either for his venom or his tooth.

"Let not ridicule intrude itself into matters of con-

troversy betwixt Christians themselves, as it seems to carry in it a spirit directly contrary to the religion they profess; as it lays both parties open to the scoffs of their common enemies; and as it can only show at last, not which has the most righteous cause, but which has the keenest pen. Experience may teach us some of the mischiefs of this practice, for instances may be given wherein men have set out in a dispute on matters of importance, and have seemed to promise much success therein from their debates, while they were confined to argument and directed by moderation; till raillery and ridicule having supplanted reasoning, the point in question was no longer in view; what was before a friendly contest for truth became a spiteful trial for wit, and from a difference of opinion, grew an irreconcilcable hatred in the heart. So much more likely is ridicule to perpetuate quarrels, than to decide a dispute."

Let us beware of indulging the most distant approach to this impious and injurious practice in our social intercourse, our habitual conversation, and our remarks upon each other. Let us cherish to the uttermost "that awe which warns us how we touch a holy thing." The name of God should never be uttered but with reverence. Religion should never be introduced but with respect. A light and a frivolous manner of speaking on sacred subjects is very criminal; how much more that profane practice of adapting the inspired language of Scripture to the ordinary occurrences of life. A Mahometan never picks up by chance a fragment of the Koran without marks of reverent respect; and yet some professing Christians employ the words of the Holy Ghost to season a jest or give smartness to repartee. If there be any truth in religion, it is the most solemn thing in

the world; and as such let it be treated, especially by those who profess to know its nature and submit to its claims.

3. If we ever find it impossible to ward off the attacks of scorn, and to avert the scoffs of the profane, then let us bear them with unruffled meekness. Consider that no new temptation has happened to you. It has been the lot of the righteous in every age to be the butt of ridicule to the wicked. "I am become the song of the drunkard," said Job. "Thou makest us," complained the Psalmist, "a bye word to the heathen. We are become a reproach and a derision to them who are round about us." The apostle tells us of some that "endured trials of cruel mockings." Tertullian informs us that in his time the heathens painted the God of the Christians with the most grotesque emblems, to signify that though they pretended to learning, they were illiterate and silly people. But why speak I of the servants, when the Master himself could affirm, "Reproach hath broken my heart." He "who was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God," was treated in the days of his incarnation, with every species and every degree of impious derision. They spat in his face, they clothed him with badges of mock royalty, they put into his hands a reed for a sceptre, and placed a crown of thorns upon his head, in mockery of his claims to a diadem: and surely one sight of the Man of Sorrows, as he appeared in the hall of Pilate, or on the hill of Calvary, is enough to make a Christian willing to become, in a good cause, the laughing stock of the world. If then, for the sake of religion you are exposed to this honourable trial, bear it patiently; return not railing for railing. Impatience, petulance, and

vexation, only encourage the scoffer to continue his attacks. Nothing will cause him so soon to cease his raillery, as to perceive that you are insensible to it. "It is an admirable thing, when by heroic fortitude, a man is able to sustain the looks of scorn or an unrestrained shower of taunts and jeers with perfect composure, who shall immediately after, or at the very time, proceed on the business which provokes all the ridicule. This invincibility of temper will often make even the scoffers themselves tired of the sport; they begin to feel that against such a man, it is a poor kind of hostility to laugh: for there is nothing people are more mortified to spend in vain than their scorn."

Consider it, as you well may, your honour to be thus persecuted for righteousness sake: next to the admiration of the wise and the good, the richest laurel that can adorn your brow is the scorn of fools. The praise of the wicked is censure and their satire praise. Every feeble mind can scoff, but only the wise man can bear it well. It was a saying of Chrysostom's, that the scorner is below a man, but the man who bears scorn patiently is equal to an angel. Instead of indulging in revenge, exercise forgiveness: you have reason rather to be grateful to the scoffer, than to be angry with him: his foul breath, though it seem to tarnish your reputation for awhile, yet being gently rubbed off by the hand of charity, shall only prepare it for a brighter lustre. He has brought you already under the influence of the beatitude, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, and for my sake." And it shall be proved hereafter

that he was the occasion of adding one more gem to the crown of glory which shall adorn your brows with unfading honour. Pity him, for he is indeed more an object of your pity than of your contempt. Pray for him, for none more needs your prayers. Tell him that if he want bread you will feed him; if he be naked you will clothe him; if sick you will minister to him; if in prison you will visit him; and that if there should be a moment when his conscience shall awake from its slumbers, and the pang of remorse shall be felt in his bosom, you will hasten to the scene of his contrition, with the consolations of the Gospel; that you will be the first to thank God for his conversion, and to hail him as a brother.

Thus prove to the scoffer that the religion which is the object of his contempt has at least the excellence, that it subdues the turbulent and irascible passions, teaches its possessor not only to pity sorrows, but to forgive iniquities practised against himself, and implants the godlike disposition of returning good for evil.

THE END.

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DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

Insert sheet O* next after sheet O.

The sixteen extra pages in the former sheet, otherwise lost in the paging, are compensated in sheet Y, by numbering as 340 the page following 323.

The Editor's Preface will be given in the last volume, but should follow the title-page in the present volume, when that is bound after its publication.

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